

2

Seeing Jesus
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

.....
A 10-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

The Lamb of God

*Seeing Jesus in
Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,
& Deuteronomy*



nancy guthrie

The Lamb of God: Seeing Jesus in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Copyright © 2012 by Nancy Guthrie

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

First printing 2012

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked HCSB have been taken from *The Holman Christian Standard Bible*®. Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

Scripture references marked NLT are from *The Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, 60189. All rights reserved.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-3298-6

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3299-3

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3300-6

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3301-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Guthrie, Nancy.

The Lamb of God : seeing Jesus in Exodus, Leviticus,
Numbers & Deuteronomy / Nancy Guthrie.

p. cm.—(Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament ; 2)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4335-3298-6 (tp)

1. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Textbooks. 2. Bible. O.T.

Pentateuch—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 3. Jesus

Christ—Biblical teaching. I. Title.

BS1225.55.G87

2012

222'.10071—dc23

2012003065

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Before We Get Started: A Note from Nancy	11
Week 1: A Prophet like Me	
Teaching Chapter: <i>He Wrote about Me</i>	17
Looking Forward	31
Discussion Guide	33
Week 2: Slavery and a Savior (Exodus 1–4)	
Personal Bible Study	37
Teaching Chapter: <i>What’s Your Story?</i>	43
Looking Forward	58
Discussion Guide	60
Week 3: Plagues and Passover (Exodus 5–12)	
Personal Bible Study	65
Teaching Chapter: <i>If You Really Want to Know Me</i>	71
Looking Forward	84
Discussion Guide	86
Week 4: Salvation and Provision (Exodus 13–17)	
Personal Bible Study	91
Teaching Chapter: <i>Safely to the Other Side</i>	95
Looking Forward	109
Discussion Guide	111
Week 5: The Giving of the Law (Exodus 19–24)	
Personal Bible Study	115
Teaching Chapter: <i>Clouds on the Mountain</i>	119
Looking Forward	133
Discussion Guide	135

Week 6: The Tabernacle (Exodus 25–40)	
Personal Bible Study	139
Teaching Chapter: <i>At Home, at Last Together</i>	144
Looking Forward	158
Discussion Guide	160
Week 7: The Priesthood (Exodus 28–29)	
Personal Bible Study	165
Teaching Chapter: <i>Category and Context</i>	171
Looking Forward	185
Discussion Guide	187
Week 8: Sacrifice and Sanctification (Leviticus)	
Personal Bible Study	191
Teaching Chapter: <i>When I Grow Up, I Want to Be . . .</i>	197
Looking Forward	210
Discussion Guide	212
Week 9: In the Wilderness (Numbers)	
Personal Bible Study	217
Teaching Chapter: <i>Road Trip</i>	221
Looking Forward	236
Discussion Guide	238
Week 10: Love and Obey (Deuteronomy)	
Personal Bible Study	243
Teaching Chapter: <i>Something Has to Happen in Your Heart</i>	246
Looking Forward	260
Discussion Guide	263
Bibliography	266
Notes	269

Before We Get Started

A Note from Nancy

A number of years ago I got to travel to the beautiful country of New Zealand. I came back with images in my mind of the magnificent yachts in the harbor preparing for the America's Cup race, the dancing of the indigenous Maori people, and the green hillsides spotted with grazing sheep. New Zealand has thirteen times more sheep than people, so there were plenty to see!

As we begin a book about the Lamb of God, I would really like to encourage you to picture fuzzy little lambs frolicking in a field and nuzzling their mothers. But I can't, because there are no living lambs in the books of Moses that we are about to study. The lambs we read about in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy do not lead us to peaceful thoughts of pastoral scenes but instead impress upon us what sin costs—the life of the lamb. All of the lambs in these books, as well as in the rest of the Old Testament, are there to point us toward one very special lamb, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He too was slain. And, interestingly, when we come to the very end of the Bible, the focus is still on the Lamb, sitting on the throne of the universe. He lives, but not as one untouched by death. Into eternity the Lamb of God bears the marks of having been slain (Rev. 5:6).

I don't think it would be an overstatement to say that if we do not understand the story of the Lamb, we cannot fully grasp the story of the Bible. Moses has much to teach us about the Lamb of God, so I hope you will engage with all three essential parts to this study over the weeks to come. The first is the personal time you will spend reading your Bible, seeking to strengthen your grip on its truths as you

work your way through the questions provided in the Personal Bible Study section of each week's lesson. This will be the easiest part to skip, but nothing is more important than reading and studying God's Word, expecting that he will meet you as you do. Because we will cover large chunks of Scripture that I will not have time to read through and explain in the Teaching Chapters or videos, the foundational understanding you will gain through your time doing the Personal Bible Study will be essential.

As you work on the Personal Bible Study, try not to become frustrated if you can't come up with an answer to every question or if you're not sure what the question is getting at. The goal of the questions is to get you into the passage and thinking it through in a fresh way, not necessarily to record all of the "right" answers. Certainly some answers to your lingering questions will become clearer as you read the chapter or watch the video and as you discuss the passage with your group.

The second part of each lesson is the Teaching Chapter, in which I seek to explain and apply the passage we are studying. If your group is using the accompanying video series, the Teaching Chapter in the book is the same content I present on the videos. If you are using the videos, you can go ahead and read the chapter as a preview, if you'd like, or simply sit back and watch the video. Or you may prefer to come back and read the chapter *after* watching the video to seal in what you've heard. It's up to you. You can also download an audio or video version of the Teaching Chapters at <http://www.crossway.com>.

At the end of each Teaching Chapter is a short piece called "Looking Forward," which will turn your attention to how what we've just studied in Moses's writings gives us insight into what is still to come when Christ returns. In these first few books of the Bible we find not only the history of what God has done in the past to redeem his people but also insight into what he is doing now and is yet to do in the future when the Lamb of God returns to take his throne.

The third part of each week's lesson is the time you spend with your group sharing your lives together and discussing what you've learned and what you're still trying to understand and apply. A discussion guide is included at the end of each week's lesson. You may want to fol-

low it exactly, working through each question as written. Or you may just want to use the guide as an idea starter for your discussion, choosing the questions that suit your group and discussing key insights you gained through the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter.

Each aspect is important—laying the foundation, building on it, and sealing it in. We all have different learning styles, so one aspect of the study will likely have more impact on you than another, but all three together will help you to truly “own” the truths in this study so that they can become a part of you as you seek to know your covenant God in deeper ways.

I’ve put the sections of this study together in a way that offers flexibility for how you can use it and in how you can schedule your time working through it. If you are going to use it for a ten-week group study, you will want to read the Teaching Chapter in Week 1, “He Wrote about Me,” before the first meeting. (There is no Personal Bible Study section for the first week.) From then on, participants will need to come to the group time having completed the Personal Bible Study section of the next week’s lesson, as well as having read the Teaching Chapter. You may want to put a star beside questions in the Personal Bible Study and underline key passages in the chapter that you want to be sure to bring up in the discussion. During your time together each week you will use the Discussion Guide to talk through the big ideas of the week’s lesson.

There is a great deal of material here, and you may want to take your time with it, letting its foundational truths sink in. To work your way through the study over twenty weeks, break each week into two parts, spending one week on the Personal Bible Study section—either doing it on your own and discussing your answers when you meet, or actually working through the questions together as a group. Over the following week, group members can read the chapter on their own and then come together to discuss the big ideas of the lesson.

If you are leading a group study, we would like to provide you with a leader’s guide that has been developed specifically for this study. To download the free leader’s guide and to look over questions and

answers submitted by fellow leaders about the study, go to <http://www.SeeingJesusintheOldTestament.com>.

Perhaps no book has been read and studied as long and by as many people in as many parts of the world as the Pentateuch, the books of Moses. But how many people who have read and studied it have never seen the one true Lamb of God? That will be our goal—to read and understand what Jesus meant when he said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me” (John 5:46). And it is there that we begin.

Nancy Guthrie



Week 8

Sacrifice and Sanctification

Leviticus

Personal Bible Study

Leviticus

1. Leviticus 1–7 contains instructions God gave to Moses regarding five offerings or sacrifices to be offered at the tabernacle. Read or skim Leviticus 1–7, noting a detail or two that seems significant to you following the example provided.

<i>Offerings</i>	<i>Observations</i>
Burnt offering (Leviticus 1)	<i>Cattle, sheep, goats, or birds without blemish Offerer put hands on animal Blood poured on altar sides Completely consumed by fire</i>
Grain offering (Leviticus 2)	
Peace offering (Leviticus 3)	
Sin offering (Lev. 4:1–5:13)	
Guilt offering (Lev. 5:14–6:7)	

We might, at first, wonder why we need to study the details of these sacrifices, since we know that Christ put an end to the sacrificial system by fulfilling it. But studying Leviticus helps us to see the breadth and fullness of what Christ did for us in offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. In fact, without Leviticus we would not understand what the New Testament means when it says that Christ was a sacrifice for sin.

2. Each of the sacrifices outlined in Leviticus 1–7 tells us something unique about the sacrifice of Christ. Look up the following New Testament passages and compose a statement about Christ that compares or contrasts the sacrifice prescribed in Leviticus with the sacrifice of Christ.

Offering	Fulfilled by Christ
Burnt offering (propitiation)	<p>1 Pet. 1:18–19 <i>Just as the burnt offering that atoned for our sin was a lamb without blemish, so was Jesus, our ransom, without blemish.</i></p> <p>Rom. 3:24 <i>While the burnt offering satisfied God's anger toward some sin, the sacrifice of Jesus satisfied his wrath against all of our sin.</i></p>
Grain offering (dedication)	John 6:48, 51
Peace offering (fellowship)	Eph. 2:13–14
Sin offering (purification)	<p>Heb. 1:3</p> <p>Heb. 13:11–12</p>
Guilt offering (restitution)	<p>Isa. 53:10</p> <p>Phil. 3:9</p>

We might think that people in the Old Testament era were saved by offering animal sacrifices (which would be works) and that we are saved by faith in Christ. But it is important for us to remember that people in the Old Testament times were saved in the same way we are saved. Here is how Vern Poythress explains it in his book *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*:

As they looked ahead through the shadows, longing for something better, they took hold on the promises of God that He would send the Messiah. The promises were given not only verbally but symbolically, through the very organization of the tabernacle and its sacrifices. In pictorial form God was saying, as it were, "Look at My provisions for you. This is how I will redeem you and bring you into My presence. But look again, and you will see that it is all an earthly symbol of something better. Don't rely on it as if it were the end. Trust Me to save you fully when I fully accomplish My plans." Israelites had genuine communion with God when they responded to what He was saying in the tabernacle. They trusted in the Messiah, without knowing all the details of how fulfillment would finally come. And so they were saved, and they received forgiveness, even before the Messiah came. The animal sacrifices in themselves did not bring forgiveness, but Christ did as He met with them through the symbolism of the sacrifices.¹

3. How are both Old Testament era saints and New Testament era saints saved, according to Romans 3:25–26?

The writer of Hebrews affirms that it was God's plan all along for the Old Testament sacrifices to point to the sacrifice of Christ and then fade away: "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin" (Heb. 10:10, 18). It isn't that the animal sacrifices failed in their divinely appointed function. They were not plan A that didn't work. They served their function, which was to serve as a symbol of the sacrifice God would accept; the sacrifices were

not the reality of it. And once the reality came, there was absolutely no further need for the symbol.

But this does not mean that the sacrificial laws outlined in Leviticus no longer apply to God's people. They still apply because God still demands an adequate sacrifice for our sins. But we observe those laws today not by offering animals according to the Mosaic system but rather by trusting Christ as our sufficient sacrifice.

4. Read through the biblical statements about the Levitical sacrifices in the left column below and write a statement in the right column that describes the superiority of the sacrifice of Christ.

<i>Old Testament Animal Sacrifices</i>	<i>Sacrifice of Christ</i>
Sacrifices could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper but dealt only with regulations. (Heb. 9:9–10)	Heb. 9:14
The high priests entered the holy places every year with the blood of a sacrificed animal. (Heb. 9:25)	Heb. 9:26
The law was a shadow of good things to come. (Heb. 10:1)	Heb. 10:1
Continual sacrifices could never make perfect those who drew near. (Heb. 10:1)	Heb. 10:14
The animal sacrifices reminded people of sin but couldn't take away sin. (Heb. 10:3–4)	Heb. 10:17

Leviticus 11–15 records purity laws defining what is clean and unclean. Clean does not equal sinless, and unclean does not equal sinful. For example, if someone had died and you were preparing the corpse for burial, that would make you unclean. It wasn't wrong or sinful to touch the person's body, but it did make you ceremonially

unclean. You would need to take certain measures to remedy your ceremonial uncleanness. Similarly, other things that we regard as good and right, such as sexual intercourse in marriage, menstruation, and childbirth, all made you unclean, but that did not mean that they were sin. “Uncleanness indicated something that deviated from what is normal.”²

The purity laws can’t be explained in terms of general wisdom for hygiene, sanitation, and gastronomic health. They focus attention on God’s act of separating clean Israel from the unclean nations. They also serve to demonstrate the effects of sin on our bodies and the environment we live in. To make sense of Leviticus 11–15, we have to have firm in our minds the events of Genesis 3, which tell us how humanity and all of creation went from being perfectly good to thoroughly broken, from clean to unclean. We also need to remember that along with the curse God pronounced that day in the garden came the promise of redemption and renewal—the seed of the woman would one day crush the head of the Serpent. That happened when Christ rose from the grave, conquering sin, death, and the Devil. And the day is coming when we will live in bodies and an environment that will be perfectly restored and even better than it once was in the garden. What is now imperfect and unclean will become perfectly clean. So, as we read the purification laws in Leviticus, rather than seeing them as random or even ridiculous, we can see that God is helping us to get a picture of the impact sin has had on us and the world we live in and his intentions to make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

5. Read or skim Leviticus 11–15, noting how the content is reflected in the middle column of the chart below. Then look up the reference in the third column and write down the biblical phrase from the passage that states how each aspect of our unclean world will be cleansed when Christ returns.

<i>Clean at Eden</i>	<i>Declared Unclean in Leviticus</i>	<i>Cleansed at the Consummation</i>
<p>All of the animals in Eden ate green plants for food. (Gen. 1:30)</p>	<p>Leviticus 11: Primarily, animals that are predators and feed on the death of another animal since the fall are unclean.</p>	<p>Isa. 11:6</p>
<p>Childbearing, which should have brought only pleasure was made painful by the curse. (Gen 3:16)</p>	<p>Leviticus 12: The pain of childbirth since the fall, illustrated by the blood loss that accompanies it, made a woman unclean.</p>	<p>Rev. 21:4</p>
<p>Adam and Eve went from abundant life and health to impending death. (Gen. 3:19)</p>	<p>Leviticus 13, 15: Chronic skin diseases and bodily discharges that demonstrate the systemic nature of death and dysfunction in our physical bodies caused by the fall made a person unclean.</p>	<p>Rev. 21:4</p>
<p>All that God had made was perfect, with no deformity or decay. (Gen. 1:31)</p>	<p>Leviticus 14: Mold and mildew in the home were indicators of the decaying nature of the world since the fall and therefore were unclean.</p>	<p>Rev. 21:22 Rev. 22:3</p>

Teaching Chapter

When I Grow Up, I Want to Be . . .

“What do you want to be when you grow up?,” we like to ask little children. And they give us the name of a profession that seems interesting or exciting. “What are you studying?,” we ask those same kids when they go off to college. They tell us their major, and we comment on what we’ve observed about that profession. However, if you ask most mothers what they want for their child, they likely won’t name a particular profession or pursuit. More likely they will say, “I don’t really care what he does; I just want him to be happy.”

Imagine a little child saying, “When I grow up I want to be holy,” or a college student saying, “I’m studying holiness because I want to live a holy life.” Imagine a mom saying, “I don’t really care what she does; I just want her to be holy.” It sounds a little strange to us, doesn’t it? Perhaps that’s because we don’t see holiness as all that important or interesting. Or perhaps we don’t really think it is possible. Yet if we were to ask God what he wants most for us, his children, surely he would say, as he has already said, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (Lev. 11:44).

For most of us, there is a part of us that wants to say in response, “Yeah, like that could happen.” We want to tell God, “I’m sorry, but you have set the bar too high. Couldn’t you just settle for me being a really nice person, trying really hard to be good? Couldn’t you just be like other parents and simply want me to be happy? Because I think I know how to pursue happiness. But holiness? I don’t know about that.” But God does not back down. God told Moses:

Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. (Lev. 19:2)

Knowing that your Father wants you to be holy, as he is, do you find within yourself any desire to be holy? Perhaps we need to ask ourselves, Have I come to the place that, more than merely being happy, what I really want is to be holy? Do I really believe that holiness is what will make me truly and eternally happy?

If we're really interested in holiness, we're going to want to turn to the book of the Bible that is all about holiness. But it is a book most of us have likely avoided—the book of Leviticus. Every year when we've had such good intentions of reading through the Bible, around mid-February, when we get to Leviticus, we have started running out of steam. Let's be honest: we find Leviticus boring—chapter after chapter of slaughter this and sacrifice that, wave this and wash that, eat this and don't eat that. Leviticus can seem redundant, remote, and, frankly, irrelevant. It's also very bloody—drain the blood, pour the blood, sprinkle the blood—which feels primitive. We don't sacrifice animals in the temple anymore, so, when we read it, we want to ask the same question our kids ask when they're studying algebra: “Do I really need to know this? How am I ever going to use this in real life?”

The big-picture message of Leviticus is this: God is holy. We hear that and want to say, “Yeah, I get that.” We hear one sermon on the holiness of God and think, *What's next?* Of course, this reveals that we have not yet begun to grasp the infinite holiness of God. The primary meaning of the word *holy* is “separate.” It comes from an ancient word that means “to cut” or “to separate.” To say that something is “holy” meant that it was a cut above. So when the Bible calls God “holy,” it means primarily that God is a cut above—in fact, so far above and beyond us that he seems almost totally foreign to us.³ When we say that God is “holy,” we also mean that his character is unimpeachable, that he cannot be charged with any wrong.”⁴ Throughout the Bible we read that God is not just holy but that he is “holy, holy, holy,” which means he is holy to an infinite degree. Now we're starting to see that grasping the holiness of God is not going to be as simple as we might have thought.

It might help us to do a quick review of where we've been thus far in Scripture, which has brought us to this revelation of God's holiness in Leviticus. In Exodus we witnessed God delivering his people out of slavery in Egypt for the very purpose that they might worship him and become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). He made clear to the Israelites that he would be their God and they would be his people, separated from evil and sin, and devoted to him. And because he did not want this to be a long-distance relationship, he instructed his people to build a tent in which he would live, in the center of their camp. At the end of Exodus we read that the very presence of God descended to dwell in that tent. He who is infinitely holy came down to live among people who were not holy.

The book of Leviticus picks up where Exodus left off, saying that "the LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting" (Lev. 1:1). What God said to Moses became the content of the book of Leviticus and provided, in practical terms, a "user's manual" for the tabernacle so that the people of God would know how to approach God and interact with him. God had come to dwell amongst his people, and he wanted them to know him by entering into an experiential understanding of his holiness. For God's people to really "get" God will require more than simply giving them the information, "I, the Lord your God, am holy." To really know God is going to require that the reality of his holiness become a part of every aspect of their lives. Everywhere they turn and everything they do will need to serve as a lesson on God's infinite holiness.

At the same time, they are going to need to see God's holiness in stark contrast to their sinfulness. Once again, they need more than simply to be told that they are sinful. They need for the reality of their sinfulness to become unavoidable and undeniable. They need to experience it in a way that will engage all of their senses and their entire schedule. Perhaps as they understand the holiness of God and their sinfulness, they will see their need for a savior who will save them from their sin and make them acceptable to their holy God. That is the essence of the book of Leviticus.

Provision of Sacrifice

Lesson number one on God's holiness and the people's sinfulness was delivered in the form of instructions for offering sacrifices at the tabernacle. Now, today when we say that something was "a real sacrifice," rarely do we mean that blood was shed. For us, *sacrifice* means giving something up or taking something on that costs us a little money or comfort or convenience. *Sacrifice* in the Bible, however, is the bloody reality of a bellowing animal being butchered on an altar. Imagine the sensory overload of this experience—the violent resistance of the animal, the spurting of blood, the feel of pulling the animal apart, the smell of its burning flesh and bones. Imagine the emotional and spiritual impact of offering this sacrifice, knowing that it was your sin that made this death necessary. And imagine the frustration in knowing that you'll be back tomorrow or next week because you will sin again.

In Leviticus chapters 1–7 we find detailed instructions for offering sacrifices—five regular offerings that will invade all of the Israelites' senses, informing their minds and engaging their hearts in regard to the seriousness of sin as well as the possibility and provision of a substitute. Why should we study these details of the various sacrifices in Leviticus, since we are no longer required to offer sacrifices? We should do so because they help us to understand *how* the work of Christ saves people like us from our sin. Each of the sacrifices points to a different aspect of Christ's sacrifice of himself.

The burnt offering was the most important sacrifice at most Israelite festivals and was offered once every morning and once every evening. Bringing the burnt offering was a very personal experience, intended most certainly to make an impression on the Israelite offering his sacrifice:

He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (Lev. 1:4–5)

To make atonement for his sin and to gain God's acceptance, the

offerer identified himself with the animal by laying his hand on the animal's head. When the animal died, it died for the offerer's sins. Neither the offerer nor the priest ate any of the meat; it was all burned in the fire. This was sacrifice in its purest form—a valuable animal given up wholly to God.

Along with the burnt offering, offered twice each day, was the grain offering of fine flour, oil, frankincense, and salt, which expressed gratitude to God and served as a way of asking the Lord to remember the offerer with favor (Leviticus 2).

The fellowship or peace offering was more than a sacrifice; it was a festive meal. A bull, a sheep, or a goat was shared by the Lord, the priests, and the one who offered it (Leviticus 3). In fact, the worshiper was allowed to bring family and friends along to spend a couple of days enjoying the meat in the presence of God at the tabernacle. The act of the offering reminded the worshiper that the only way he had been able to come back into the fullness and joy of fellowship and communion with God was through the blood of a perfect substitutionary sacrifice.

Sin pollutes and corrupts. The sin offering was offered to cleanse away the filth of sin. In this offering, something unusual was done with the blood:

The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the LORD in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the LORD that is in the tent of meeting, and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (Lev. 4:6–7)

By using the blood of the animal in this way, God was demonstrating in dramatic fashion that it was the blood that atoned for Israel's sin. The blood cleansed the tabernacle, the priests, the people, and the land from the defilement caused by the sin of the people. There was blood on the veil, blood on the horns of the altar, and blood poured out. Everywhere the sinner looked was an unavoidable statement about the pervasive nature of sin and need for atonement.

The guilt offering asked for something beyond sacrifice; it required

restitution. The guilty person had to confess his sin publicly, offer the blood sacrifice, and also make full restitution of what was defrauded, adding an additional 20 percent. Rather than a cheap or easy repentance, this dearly cost the person who sinned.

By offering these sacrifices in faith, the people of the Old Testament demonstrated their faith in Christ, the superior, once-for-all sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

None of the animals offered in these sacrifices could, in themselves, take away a person's sin or truly pay the debt for sin. But by offering these sacrifices in faith, the people of the Old Testament demonstrated their faith in Christ, the superior, once-for-all sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Principle of Substitution

The sacrificial provisions in Leviticus taught the Israelites that God can be approached with the blood of a worthy substitute. And while all of these sacrifices might seem like an unbearable burden to us, wouldn't you be relieved, as an Israelite, to know that, instead of paying the penalty for sin yourself, God would accept a substitute in your place?

Yes, there was certainly a cost to these sacrifices. Imagine the expense of taking the best animal in your herd down to the temple in Jerusalem just to be burnt up. That was the animal that would have produced the best offspring, and it wasn't easy to give up. Imagine the time burden, especially if you didn't live in Jerusalem. You would have to travel and find a place to stay. Imagine the emotional or spiritual burden as you made this trek, knowing that you would have to identify and confess your sin to the priest in offering your sacrifice. But also imagine the burden rolling away. When you slit that animal's throat and watched it burn, and the priest declared your sin forgiven, imagine the sense of relief you felt. You would think, *It should be me. I am the one who deserves to die. But this innocent animal has become my substitute. This animal has died so I can live.* This was good news.

Promise of Cleansing

If you were an ancient Israelite, Leviticus would have helped you to understand how the death penalty you deserved for your sin could be dealt with by a substitutionary sacrifice. It would also have helped you to grasp how God would make it possible for the Israelites, as sinful people, to approach a holy God and to be made holy as he is. To impress this upon his people, God set up a system of symbols so that everything in their ordinary lives was classified into one of three categories: holy, clean, or unclean.

But to grasp what God was intending to teach, we have to understand that Leviticus uses the language of *clean* and *unclean* differently than we do today. When we use these terms, we're usually talking about health or hygiene—about whether something is dirty and germ-infested or free of such contaminants. When our hands are clean, we don't want to dig down into the trashcan to get something, because we don't want them to get dirty. Or when we're covered with dirt from working in the yard, we don't want to sit down on the couch and get it dirty. But in Leviticus, rather than referring to health or hygiene, *holy*, *clean*, and *unclean* refer to ritual states or categories. What makes these categories hard for us to grasp is that many of the laws presented in Leviticus concerning cleanness and uncleanness don't offer an explicit rationale for why something or someone is clean or unclean. But the big-picture story of the Bible can help us to make sense of this. When we set the clean and unclean laws in the big story of the Bible—that God created everything clean and beautiful in the garden, that Adam and Eve's sin ruined that perfection, that Christ took the curse and uncleanness of the world upon himself, and that the day is coming when all of creation will be purified and made whole—what may have seemed random or ridiculous or even cruel becomes purposeful and powerful and precious.

The laws for clean and unclean begin in Leviticus 11 with what might seem at first like a random designation of animals that were unclean, animals that were clean, and animals that could be sacrificed (holy). The unclean animals were those that came into contact with carcasses, and, therefore, just as contact with a dead body made a person unclean, this contact made these animals unclean, according to the law.

The clean animals were those that “chew the cud” or were vegetarian, which is what all animals were in the garden of Eden. In chapter 12, we discover that a woman was unclean for a number of weeks after she had a baby, which is a very bloody experience. In chapter 13, we’re told that chronic skin diseases—the kind of diseases that are not temporary but indicate something is wrong systemically—made one unclean. Similarly, we find in chapter 14 that mold and mildew exhibited in the walls of a house made a house unclean. And in chapter 15, we are told that any bodily discharge made a person temporarily unclean.

Do you see a pattern here of disease, decay, and death? And do you see that all of these disorders provide a graphic demonstration of the effects of the curse on all of humanity and the entirety of creation? Disease and decay are a major feature of living in a fallen and cursed creation. By selecting certain examples of disease and decay and labeling them unclean, we learn that all disease, decay, and death are unacceptable to the one who created heaven and earth and pronounced it good. “The Living God sees all these intruders into His wonderful creation and reassures us, through these laws, that one day he will certainly drive these squatters out.”⁵

Leviticus is a living picture of God’s rejection of the effects of sin on humanity and creation and his intention to one day set everything right.

Food laws didn’t have to do with a healthy diet or food safety. And the isolation and washing of those with diseases didn’t have to do with preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Leviticus is not an ancient guidebook for a healthy diet and disease prevention, though many people have tried

to reduce it to that. Leviticus is a living picture of God’s rejection of the effects of sin on humanity and creation and his intention to one day set everything right. Every day, as you avoided what would make you unclean or dealt with what had made you unclean, it would be a reminder to you that the Lord had not forgotten how he made the world before human sin and that he will not forget his promise to make all things new.

Everything designated as unclean pointed out the effects of the curse of sin on this world. Animals fed on other animals only after the

curse. Childbirth became painful and bloody only after the curse, and sexual relations between men and women became infected with sinful passions only after the curse. Bodies bled and developed disease only after the curse. Children were born with birth defects only after the curse. Mold and mildew, the visible evidence of decay, came into being only after the curse. So these things were unclean.

But God will not abandon our world to its uncleanness. He will make it clean. The way the world will become clean will be by the blood of a sacrifice sufficient to atone for the world's sin.

Are you beginning to see that all of the laws of Leviticus were a visual aid to present the gospel of Christ? And can you see what this system of symbols would have impressed upon you if you had lived every day working out its demands? Everything you ate, everything and everyone you touched, and everything you did had to be run through the grid of clean and unclean. You would have known that God was interested in your whole life, not just your religious activity. You would have known that what is holy cannot and must not come in contact with what is unclean, which would have motivated you to reject the unclean lifestyle of the Canaanites around you. You also would have had hope knowing that things that were unclean could become clean. A person with a skin disease or discharge could become clean by offering the appropriate sacrifice and ceremonial washing. The priest and the instruments he used in the tabernacle could be consecrated, or be made "holy to the Lord," by the sprinkling of the blood of an acceptable sacrifice. And this would have made it possible for you to put your faith in the sacrifice to which all of the animals slaughtered on Israelite altars pointed, believing that his blood would not only cleanse you but make you holy and acceptable to God.

Disparity of Conduct

"By constantly calling the Israelites to *ritual* purity in all aspects of life, the Lord was reminding them of their need for . . . seeking after *moral* purity in all aspects of life."⁶ He intended that they live in such a way that would set them apart from all of the people around them who had no desire to reflect God's holy nature—they would be distinct, distin-

guishable, and different from the nations, for the sake of the nations. Having this holy God as their god placed a claim on their lives that would make a difference in what they would and wouldn't do.

You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them. . . . You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (Lev. 20:22–23, 26)

The Egyptians who had enslaved the Israelites lived lives that reflected the gods they worshiped. The Canaanites who surrounded the Israelites lived in accord with the gods they worshiped. Likewise, the one true God, who is holy, holy, holy, said to his people that their lives should reflect the innate quality of the God they served. They should be uncontaminated by the ways of the world around them, unimpeachable in character, exquisite in beauty, and perfect in love like their God.

And it is the same for us. Our lives should reflect the holiness of the God we serve. And so I have to ask you: does your belonging to Christ make a difference in what you will or will not do? Do you have a longing for holiness—for Christlikeness—that compels you to draw the line where many of those around you really have no lines? Where have you drawn the line in what you will let your eyes see and not see, what you will consume and reject, and what you will walk away from and walk toward? I'm not just talking about moral lines or setting yourself apart *from* the world. I'm also asking about your being set apart *to* the Lord. Does your longing to be holy to the Lord have any impact on your Saturday night and Sunday morning schedule so that you will be prepared, body and soul, to worship on the Lord's Day? Does your willingness to be different mean that your Facebook updates and photos reflect an innate desire to know and be pleasing to God in a way that is quite different from that of your unbelieving friends? Or are your life and calendar, your priorities and passions, really pretty much the same as those around you who do not belong to Christ—but with a little church activity added in?

If you belong to God through the saving work of Jesus Christ, are you being made holy by the ongoing sanctifying work of Christ through the Word of God? If you have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, are you now living a clean life? This is the very purpose for which God has poured out his grace on you—to empower you for your pursuit of holiness.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11–14)

Leviticus showed the people of God what it was going to mean to live with a holy God in their midst and what it was going to take to be able to approach him. But while Leviticus provided a good start, it did not provide the whole picture. “The only reason we do not have to keep every detail of the God-given revelation of the book of Leviticus is *not* that we live in a modern world and that was a primitive age. It’s that what Jesus Christ has done is so breathtakingly superior and sufficient, these regulations have become unnecessary.”⁷ Our pursuit of holiness centers not on what we touch or what we eat, but on whom we are resting for our righteousness.

But we must read and understand Leviticus even though we are not required to follow all of its regulations, because the more we understand about what Christ has replaced, surpassed, and fulfilled, the deeper and sweeter our love for and worship of him becomes. Every sacrifice and sanctification law in Leviticus reveals to us the beauty of Christ from yet another angle.

Perfection in Holiness

The people of the Old Testament looked forward to one who would be completely holy in a way they never could be, which is why so much excitement surrounded that day when, as Luke recounts it, the angel announced to the virgin Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you,

and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The holy one of God entered into the filth of this world in order that he might offer himself as a sacrifice for sin; to shed his blood so that we might become fully and finally clean.

∞ *Jesus was God’s provision of a sacrifice* that put an end to the need for all of the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus. “He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26). It is not that a sacrifice for our sin is no longer required. It is that the sacrifice of Christ is good enough, perfect enough, to cover your sin and my sin and the sin of all who will put their faith in the sufficiency of his once-for-all sacrifice.

∞ *Jesus was the pleasing aroma* in the nostrils of his Father. “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2). Christ’s sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord because it was a tangible, unmistakable, worldwide demonstration of the sacrificial way in which God loves sinners.

∞ *Jesus was our substitute.* Just as the people of God put their hands on the head of the bull or the sheep and their sins were transferred to that innocent animal, so when by faith we lay hold of Christ, our guilt is transferred to him, our substitute.

∞ *Jesus alone is our promise of cleansing.* Jesus, the ultimate clean thing, was continually touching unclean things.⁸ Perhaps this is exactly what Mark wants us to see in chapter 5 of his Gospel, where we read about Jesus touching unclean thing upon unclean thing—a man with an unclean spirit who lived among the dead near a herd of pigs and cut himself. This man was exponentially unclean. What did Jesus do? He cleansed him so that when the people came out to see him, he was “clothed and in his right mind.” Next, a woman who had a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind Jesus in a crowd and touched his clothing. When he asked who had touched him, Mark tells us she came “in fear and trembling.” Why was she afraid? She was afraid because she had made him ceremonially unclean just by her touch. But Jesus recognized this for what it was—reaching out to take hold of the health and wholeness found only in him—in other words, faith. In the same chap-

ter, Mark tells us that Jesus went to the home of the ruler of the synagogue, someone in charge of enforcing the rigid cleanliness laws of his day. When he got there, people were weeping and wailing loudly because the synagogue ruler's daughter was dead. Jesus took the girl by her hand, touching this dead body, which made him ceremonially unclean, and infused her with his own resurrection life. Throughout the Gospels Jesus reaches out to touch lepers and make them clean, and each one shows us a picture of the way Jesus makes sinners clean. He reaches out to touch us, taking upon himself our sin sickness and uncleanness, imparting to us his health, wholeness, and acceptance. We are cleansed because the Holy One of God became unclean for us.

☞ Finally, *Jesus is our only hope for dealing with the disparity of our conduct.* The entire law is still applicable because the entire law reflects God's unchanging character. Nevertheless, the way in which we are to obey the law has changed significantly, due to the coming of Christ.

The sacrificial laws still apply because God still demands an adequate sacrifice for our sins. Nevertheless, we observe those laws today not by offering animals according to the Mosaic system but by trusting Christ as our sufficient sacrifice. The cleanliness laws still apply because God still demands that we be cleansed of all unrighteousness in order to be in his presence. But we observe those laws today not by going to the priest to be sprinkled with blood but by going to our Great High Priest, who showers us with the forgiveness he purchased for us at the cross. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Jesus has freed us from following the regulations of Leviticus. It's not that he has thrown them out; rather he has fulfilled them in himself so that Leviticus no longer has mastery over those who come to him. As you are joined to him, you find that your heart beats with his very heartbeat, igniting in you a passion for personal holiness. You find yourself saying, "When I grow up, I want to be holy" because "you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Looking Forward

Nothing Unclean Will Ever Enter It

In Leviticus 21, we read the very stringent guidelines for those who will serve as priests in his holy sanctuary:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron, saying, None of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God. For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf or a man with a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles. No man of the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD’s food offerings; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy things, but he shall not go through the veil or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries, for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” (Lev. 21:16–23)

When we read this, we can’t help but feel a bit offended on human terms—especially those of us who have dealt with the pain of disability, disfigurement, or birth defects. It can appear that those who have physical defects are not “good enough” for God or that he has no desire to have them in his presence. But we must set those instinctual feelings of offense aside so that we can hear and understand what God is really doing and saying here, which, rather than being offensive, provides the answer we have looked for our whole lives to the pain of physical disfigurement and defect. We need eyes to see the hope in what may at first seem harsh.

When the priest went into the tabernacle, he was entering into the holy abode of God. As we remember from our earlier study of the tabernacle, the tabernacle provided a reminder of Eden and the hope of heaven. So when the priest entered into the Holy Place it was as if he was entering into heaven itself. And God is too good to allow disease, deformity, defect, and death to enter into heaven. When we read that God will not allow a

priest with any defect or deformity to enter into the Holy Place, that is not bad news for those of us who have felt the pain of such things in this world, but good news. God is saying that he is not willing to make peace with effects of sin on this world. He will not forever tolerate disease and deformity and death. He intends to put an end to them. They will not be allowed into his holy heaven. This means that if you have been touched by the pain of such things, you can be sure that when you enter into his presence, you will be healed and whole. All of the effects of the brokenness of this world that have brought you pain will be gone for good. In Revelation we read:

Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Rev. 21:27)

Here in Leviticus, as God lays out the system of clean and unclean, he is helping his people to understand that what is unclean because of the effects of sin can be made clean because of the blood of an all-sufficient sacrifice. What is impaired will be made right. What is deformed will be made whole. And all that is made clean, right, and whole through the sacrifice of Christ will one day be made holy to live with him in the fullness of his holy presence.

Discussion Guide

Sacrifice and Sanctification

Getting the Discussion Going

1. In Nancy's teaching she said that many people who intend to read through the Bible start to slow down or give up altogether when they get to Leviticus. Why do you think that is, and have you ever had that experience?

Getting to the Heart of It

2. Nancy mentioned three reasons that people are often uninterested in Leviticus: they see it as boring, bloody, and irrelevant to their lives. After spending time studying Leviticus, would you agree or disagree? Why?

3. Just like last week, when we studied the establishment of the priesthood, we see that details that might seem tedious to us are actually quite significant. How did your study of the five offerings add to your understanding of Christ's sacrifice of himself?

4. Some churches and church leaders suggest that some traditions and theological approaches put too much emphasis on the atonement of Christ and should instead put more emphasis on the teachings of Christ as found in the Sermon on the Mount. How would you use Leviticus to argue with this viewpoint?


5. What would you say to someone who says the purity laws in Leviticus appear to be random or harsh?
6. Would you say that the sacrifices and purity laws of Leviticus were a blessing or a burden to the children of Israel? Why?
7. Holiness is the opposite of worldliness. What do you think it means to be worldly? What are some examples of worldliness?

Getting Personal

8. God instructs his people in Leviticus to be holy, to be set apart from the people around them, and Peter reiterates that command in the New Testament (1 Pet. 1:14–16). Nancy challenged us to consider if we have come to the place where we truly want to be holy, set apart from the world around us to the Lord. Are there some practical ways you could pursue holiness in your life that you would be willing to share with the group?

Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. Throughout this study, we are seeking to grasp how the passage we're studying fits into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. How does God's designation of clean and unclean actually help us to see the big picture of the Bible from Eden all the way to the new heaven and the new earth?

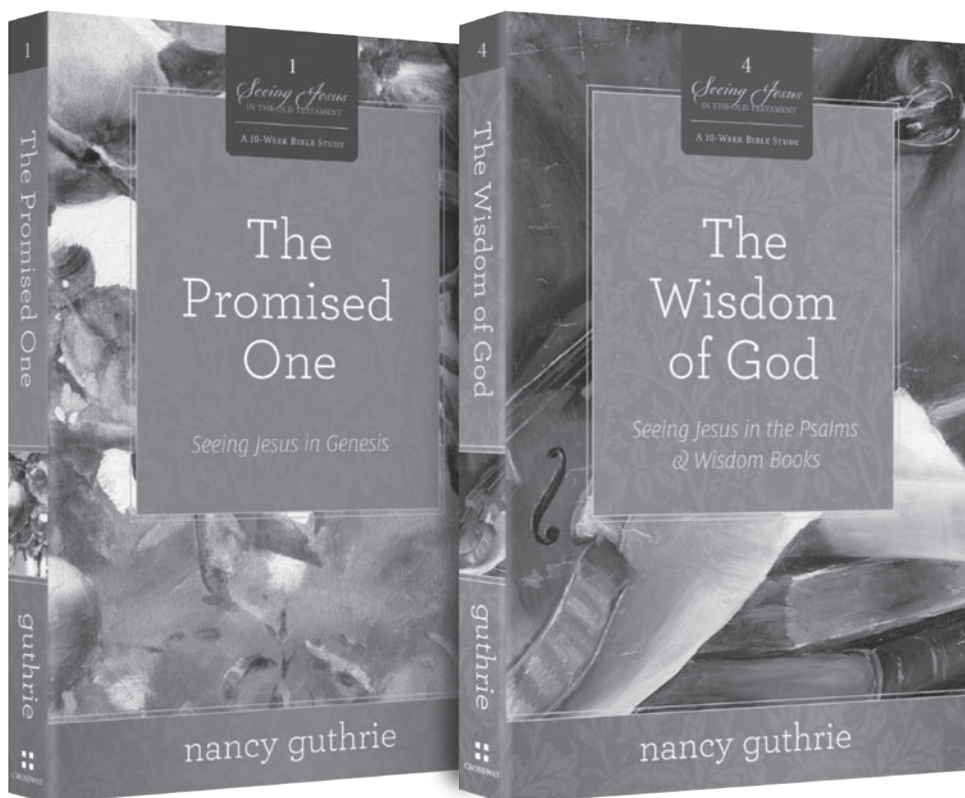


For additional content, downloads,
and resources for leaders, please visit:

www.SeeingJesusInTheOldTestament.com



Also Available in the *Seeing Jesus
in the Old Testament Series*



A ten-session DVD companion
is also available for each study.

Coming in June 2013!

The Son of David

Seeing Jesus in the Historical Books

SeeingJesusInTheOldTestament.com

“For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.” (John 5:46)

Jesus’s declaration that Moses wrote of him frames this study of four books of the Pentateuch—Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—as we discover the many ways that Moses spoke about Christ. Seasoned Bible teacher Nancy Guthrie shows that the Bible’s story from beginning to end is the story of the Lamb—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Over ten weeks of guided personal Bible study, relevant teaching, and group discussion, you will see the person and work of Christ:

- in the person of Moses as a great deliverer, mediator, and prophet;
- in the manna, the water from the rock, and the bronze serpent on the pole;
- and in the priesthood, tabernacle, and sacrificial system.

Gain a fresh perspective on the story of Israel’s deliverance and journey, a broader understanding of Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture, and much more, when you join with Nancy on this incredible journey to see Jesus in the Old Testament!

** A leader’s guide is available as a free download at SeeingJesusInTheOldTestament.com and a supplemental DVD of Nancy’s teaching is also available for purchase.*

.....
“User-friendly, biblically reliable, theologically astute, enthusiastically sensible, encouragingly realistic, and deeply Christ-centered . . . Once again we are deeply indebted to Nancy Guthrie for giving the church an outstanding Bible study resource to help us all grow in the grace, knowledge, and wisdom of God.”

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON, Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC

“Nancy’s exhaustive research, her facility in writing, and her thought provoking questions make these studies both challenging and enjoyable. I cannot wait to lead the women in my group through each of her studies!”

MAUREEN KYLE, Bible study leader, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City



.....
nancy guthrie teaches the Bible at conferences around the country and is currently pursuing graduate studies at Covenant Theological Seminary. She is the author of more than a dozen books and editor of *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross* and *Be Still, My Soul*.

BIBLE STUDY

