

Understanding God in the Old Testament

Leviticus 24-27

A God of Blessing

This morning I want to conclude our study through the book of Leviticus and look at the final four chapters. We have been looking at understanding God in the Old Testament – a glimpse into the character and desires of God. Although many think of the Old Testament as violent and harsh, it does within its words show us a side of God that is all too often overlooked – the holiness and majesty of God.

In the words of the Old Testament we see God as the ultimate Creator, we see him as the sustainer of all living things, we see him as a God of promises, we see him as a God who delivers, we see him as a God who wants to draw close, we see him as a God who calls us to live in civility and not barbarianism, we see him as a God who wants nothing more than to be with his creation not as a power hungry egotistical God, but one who want close and intimate connection with you and I.

All of these characteristics we also find in the New Testament. Yet all too often we bask in the grace of God instead of seeing just how big of a privilege it is to be able to connect with our Creator. In our human reasoning we can't even begin to fully understand him or his ways. No Hollywood picture could do him justice. No Michelangelo painting can capture the majesty and holiness of God. Yet if we take our time and see God in the Old Testament, we can catch just a hint of what his holiness and majesty is like.

Many times we are afraid to look at this part of God because of our own flaws or insufficiencies. Our lifetime of accomplishment is equal to a second of God's daily routine. Yet, this God of scripture is one draws near to us, and sheds his love and grace upon us, giving us truth to set us free, and giving our life purpose and meaning beyond mere existence.

When we last left off from the book of Leviticus we looked at the idea that we serve a God of celebration and how he instructed the Israelites to celebrate certain times of the year. There were seven celebrations: The Passover (A celebration of God's deliverance), The Festival of Unleavened Bread (A celebration of God giving us purpose), the Festival of First Fruits and the Festival of Harvest (a celebration of God's Provision), the Festival of Trumpets (a celebration of thanksgiving), the day of atonement (a celebration of restored relationship with God), and the Festival of Shelters (a celebration of God's commitment to his people).

If some of you remember, I made mention that we need to spend more time remembering these things in our lives and as we come together as a group of people that we would celebrate these things today. So today after service we are celebrating God's relationship with us. My hope is that each of us will be able to share what our relationship with God

has done in us and what God is teaching us. That is today after service with a potluck and all are invited.

This morning I want to finish our study of Leviticus by look at our God as being a God of Blessing. Webster's defines "**Blessings**" as "**approval or encouragement**" or "**something that brings happiness.**" After God has given the children of Israel very specific instructions as to how they are to approach him, how they are to worship him, and how they are to treat each other, God promises to reward them with blessings – five to be exact. **The Four Blessings of God.** The first we find in **Leviticus 26:3-5:**

3 "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, 4 I will send you the seasonal rains. The land will then yield its crops, and the trees of the field will produce their fruit. 5 Your threshing season will overlap with the grape harvest, and your grape harvest will overlap with the season of planting grain. You will eat your fill and live securely in your own land.

1. The Blessing of Provision

Notice that it is not only a promise of provision but provision in abundance (the seasons will overlap and you will eat your fill). **No form of obedience to God goes overlooked.** He promises to give us what we need if we put our trust in him. Everything comes from him and he has promised to give us what we need. Do things always pan out the way we would like them to? Do we always get what we want? No. But God has promised to reward us for our faithfulness. King David spoke about the provision of God in **Psalm 144:13-15:**

13 May our barns be filled with crops of every kind. May the flocks in our fields multiply by the thousands, even tens of thousands, 14 and may our oxen be loaded down with produce. May there be no enemy breaking through our walls, no going into captivity, no cries of alarm in our town squares. 15 Yes, joyful are those who live like this! Joyful indeed are those whose God is the Lord.

I can tell you miraculous stories of God's provision in my own life and in the life of my parents - dire circumstances met with the provision of God. How arrogant for me to think that I am my own provider and that the growth of fruit, vegetables is a result of anything else but the life-giving sustaining power of God.

It wasn't long ago that I was sitting at a discussion about food and how in our culture we are inundated with processed and injected food that has been stripped of his nutrients and manipulated to the point to where it is no longer viable food. In fact, I heard that one of the best ways to shop is to shop the perimeter of the supermarkets where the fruits and vegetables, fresh meat and bread are – those things that are left the way God created them. We have food because God created it for us and has promised to us.

Think of the early farmers and how dependent they were on their crops and upon God. He has promised to reward faith with his provision.

2. The Blessing of Protection

Leviticus 26:6-8 tells us:

6 “I will give you peace in the land, and you will be able to sleep with no cause for fear. I will rid the land of wild animals and keep your enemies out of your land. 7 In fact, you will chase down your enemies and slaughter them with your swords. 8 Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand! All your enemies will fall beneath your sword.

This was a promise of security. When people would stand up against Israel they were also standing against their God. **Obedience to God will not be overlooked but will bring comfort in the fact that God will be our defense.** **Psalm 91:1-2** tells us:

1 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.

If we set our sights on following God, if we make him our God, he will stand up for us and defend us. Look at the odds in **Leviticus 26:8**:

8 Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand! All your enemies will fall beneath your sword.

Clearly these odds aren't based on man's ability but God's sovereign power. If you are faithful to God he is more than faithful to you. When you told God that he was your Lord, you became inseparable to him and now he has become all that you need.

The third blessing of God for our obedience is his promise.

3. The Blessing of Promise

Look at **Leviticus 26:9-12**:

9 “I will look favorably upon you, making you fertile and multiplying your people. And I will fulfill my covenant with you. 10 You will have such a surplus of crops that you will need to clear out the old grain to make room for the new harvest! 11 I will live among you, and I will not despise you. 12 I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people.

The covenant or promise is taken from **Genesis 17:7** where God tells Abraham:

7 “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

God promises to walk with us, to accept us and to guide us. In fact **2 Corinthians 6:16** tells us:

For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people."*

God has promised to be the closest relationship we could possibly have by allowing his Spirit to live within us so that we can take him wherever we go. Look at **Isaiah 41:10**:

10 Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

God has promised never to turn his back on us but to become our strength, our help and ultimately our victory. Isn't it good to know that we aren't by ourselves? God rewards our faith with the promise of his presence.

Finally this morning we see that we serve a God who grants us the blessing of privilege.

4. The Blessing of Privilege (Freedom).

Look at **Leviticus 26:13**:

13 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so you would no longer be their slaves. I broke the yoke of slavery from your neck so you can walk with your heads held high.

Many times the land of Egypt is used in scripture as a symbol for the world where sin can come and enslave people with so many different things. **When we follow God he has promised to bring freedom and liberty so that we can walk with dignity.** Freedom from our guilt, freedom from our inabilities, and freedom from our shame. In **Luke 4:18** Jesus said of himself:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."*

*7 God is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. **Ephesians 1:7***

*6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time. **1Timothy 2:6***

The freedom we have is a result of God sending his son into the world to live among us, to point us to heaven, to give his life as a payment for our sin, and to conquer the grave so that we can have the hope of eternal life. Jesus Christ purchased the freedom of our

never ending relationship and connection with God – the Creator is once again reconnected to his creation.

Isn't it good to know that God sees everything that we do and rewards us by blessing us with his provision, his protection, his promise and his privilege? He shows his acceptance of us by being there with us through whatever life hands us, he encourages us when it seems like our world is crashing in around us, and he gives us hope when nothing seems to go right.

Obedience welcomes the presence of God and his blessings far outweigh the sacrifice of faith it requires of us.

We serve a God of blessings most of which are undeserved yet full of mercy. May we find comfort and confidence in God and rest in his hands. Amen!