

WHO GETS THE GLORY, LEV.17

Ancient Access Codes #5

◆**Intro:** John Stedman walked across the patio with a beautiful fountain in the middle. His toddler, noticing a variety of coins in the pool ask for an explanation. "Oh, people throw coins in for good luck." Of course Jonny Jr wanted to throw money away too, er, I mean "throw money in too." Walking into a nearby deli John ordered a Ham & Swiss on rye, which the chef claimed would be good for his health. "That great. I need all the health I can get." said John adding, "Knock on wood". With that he tapped the counter with his knuckles. Just then his friend George walked in with his pit-bull on a leash, which began to bark incessantly for whatever reason. "Hey, hey there buddy. How youuz doing you little canine?" said John, bending down to scratch the dog, who quickly quieted. "Yep" said he, "I have a good karma with dogs."

◆Though John doesn't realize it, he has just been teaching his impressionable little son three times over that there are various powers out there, somewhere, that one can turn to help, and learn to manipulate for your own benefit: 1) Lady Luck who we may suppose likes wet copper in small amounts; 2) hidden spirits who we may suppose are afraid of wooden knocking sounds; 3) and the oriental belief in Karma, a spiritual power that pervades material existence and attaches itself to us according to good and bad deeds in previous existences. According to this buddhist belief, John may have been a kindly dog himself in a previous life.

◆Any one of these nonchalant actions on John's part would have gotten him "cut off", or banished from the nation of Israel, as well

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as decreased his possibilities of experiencing happiness, joy, and peace that accompany living with the One True God. Why? because to live near unto God requires holiness, as we have seen repeatedly in Leviticus. Chapters 17-26, often referred to as the "Holiness Codes" lay down blocks of laws about how to honor God in our everyday living, with the added grace that as we rightly honor and glorify God, we find holiness and with it, peace and health. But before we dig specifically into our text, I'd like to take a moment to review the whole theme of Leviticus, namely, holiness.

◆1. Did you know you can be holy?

◆Did you know that six hours after tickets went on sale, the film *Avengers: Endgame* had already surpassed the number of ticket sales in the first twenty-four hours for the previous record holder, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. It won't be out until April 26, but it's already making the internet crash. Why? Isn't it because we all know we need a hero. In a world with terrorists, high crime rates, divided political parties, killer viruses, prejudice, school shootings -everybody's on edge! We'd all love a fixer to sweep in and put everything right. And we all imagine that some super person will make any difference. So, because there is so much wrong in the world we rule out holiness on our own part.

◆Some folks think maybe Mother Teresa could have been holy. Or maybe an ancient priest. But not us! Do you know where that leads? Jim Denison writes, "When we believe the

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lie that we cannot be holy, we forfeit our ability to impact our culture effectively." In other words, we don't do the things God said to do because we think it can't really be done. We stop trying and just blend in instead! So nobody knows we are followers of Jesus because we don't act any different. We watch the same movies. We use the same words. We prioritize the same things on our calendars. We don't discuss points of faith with other religions because it requires thinking, and choosing. Instead we join the mantra "accept everyone" and erroneously conclude then that there is right or wrong way to live or believe. The result? Many Christians make no difference. No one can tell.

◆ But if the Bible tells us anything, it tells us that there is such thing as holiness and no-one and no-thing that doesn't find holiness is going to last! God is eternal. God is holy. God and only what's done for him and through him lasts. The reason there is a Bible, and the reason there is a Church of Jesus is because God wants to make humans holy so they can last!

◆ "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14, NIV.

◆ "[God] swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." Luke 1:73-75, NIV.

◆ "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy.""; 1 Peter 1:15, 16, NIV.

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◆ "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." 1

Thessalonians 4:7

◆ God doesn't expect what cannot happen. He's too smart for that. He is not telling a fish to walk. He's telling a man to be holy. Therefore, with God in your life it can happen! Leviticus is all about this. In fact without Leviticus we can't even understand Christianity! That's good news folks! Through the forgiving power of Jesus, you and I can grow holier! He can change our personalities. He can even change the things you want, and wish for -until those things become good things, pure wishes. *We call this growth in holiness sanctification; being made holy.* I didn't always understand this. Satan loves it when we don't because then we just give up. In my younger years I thought we can never be holy on earth. We are totally depraved. We shall have to wait for heaven for progress. I guess we just keep living without it.

◆ Do not be misled. Total depravity does not mean there is nothing good in us or that progress isn't possible. It does not mean that we are all as bad as we can be. Lost yes. Total depravity simply means all parts of us have the stain of sin, spirit/soul/body/will -all parts. But Jesus Christ can clean all parts of us and it starts here in this life.

◆ **2. Holiness requires that I worship God exclusively.**

◆ This is the point of our text. To be holy, you gotta give your heart, your hoping, your worship to the holy God alone. As you give your life to worship the true God, your holiness grows. It just

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comes with the territory! Why is that? **C. S. Lewis** explained it this way:

◆ "God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other...That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there." (*Mere Christianity*)

◆**A.** Now the danger the Israelites faced in the days Moses wrote Leviticus down was the danger of turning to other god's for their hope. This was easy to do. In their day everybody did that. Tabernacles, court yards, priests, altars, sacrifices -every culture had these! And they had other habits. Altars out in nowhere to this god. Altars over here for that god. So God changes things:

◆v5 You bring your sacrifices only "to the Lord."

◆v7 No more sacrifices to "goat demons."

◆Even the animals they used in sacrifices point out a huge shift.

On scholar writes:

◆"the animals selected for Israelite sacrifice [are] those sacred to various Egyptian gods. For example, the ram was sacred to the sun god Amon-Rē, the bull to Apis, the cow to Hathor, and so on. Therefore, God was commanding Israel to

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sacrifice to him the animals sacred to, and representative of, the Egyptian gods, as a process of religious de-Egyptianizing the people of Israel.” JSB

◆ You need to realize that Baal worship was so common it was like going to the movies. Everybody did it! We want to feel hopeful? We go and watch Captain Marvel, or Spiderman fix the world. They want to feel hopeful. They offer a sacrifice to Baal, or some other demonic force. Sacrificing to other gods was as common as filling up your gas tank in those days. Don't want to run out of gas before a trip? Fill up. Don't want to run out of blessing on the road today? Sacrifice to the altar on that road, or the god of that place.

◆ **B.** So what's our take-away? Other gods are no good. You will dissolve holiness and life in the powerful presence of the true God as you give your heart to other gods. What gods are you substituting? Maybe the best assessment of our fill-in gods comes from where we run when we fall down. Where do you turn in need and desperation? Let's take a serious example: say your child is missing! Didn't get off the bus. No one knows anything! Can you feel it? A friend tells you about a medium who found their grandma when she wandered away from the nursing home. Do you go to the medium? You prayed and God didn't tell you where little Micky is so...? If we consulted the spiritist that would be the same problem Israel had. And our holiness would

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dissipate all the more. And our ability to sense the true God and hear from his Holy Spirit would quiet.

◆To walk with God, God requires exclusive rights to your worship. Look. Verse 8: "or any alien". Verse 10 same thing. Verse 13 same thing. Verse 15 same thing. Aliens were welcome in Israel, but NOT their religions/gods. There is only one God.

◆No also-praying to the Buddha. No also-bowing at a monument. No also-hoping in Karma. Or from another angel, no bowing to the bottle. No running to the porn. No spending more so that you feel good for a day. You go to God, talk with him, plead his help, repent of sin. Who gets the glory. Only God.

◆How serious is this? The Levitical laws tell us...

◆**3. My holiness requires blood. Only blood makes atonement for unholiness.** Maybe we should say it another way: My unholiness requires blood to bring me back to holiness. Putting someone back into holiness, or a good place with God, is what "atonement" means. Atonement means a debt has been paid, a relational obstacle has been removed, You recall from last week that unholiness/sin and death go hand in hand (Rom.6:23). Where there is sin, there will always be death. Where there is holiness and God there will always be life. The two are diametrically opposed to each other and God always wins.

◆The levitical sacrifices symbolize the necessary and ultimate devastation of all that is sinful, and promise of ransomed life.

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God put his tent in the middle of Israel. But Israel was sinful and God's light kills sin like the UV light kills microbes in your furnace. It has to happen. Sin has to die. Its a chemical/spiritual reality. But God says to Israel, and to us, "I want you to live. I will let something else die for you. I will take other blood than yours. I will take other life than yours because I love you."

◆ Now to fully grasp the weight of this proposition we need to realize that we have **not given** the sacrifice that took our place. Pagan sacrifices saw themselves giving something to the deity to assuage its anger. Hebrew sacrifices were different. God was giving us something to take our sentence!

◆ v11 There is extra word for "I" in the hebrew. "I myself, have given it to you to make atonement. We do not even MAKE our own atonement. We accept it! We accept that God accepts the lifeblood of an animal he already owns instead of ours. God is at once the payee and the payer.

◆ *In Francine Rivers book As Sure as the Dawn, a German barbarian, Roth, has just returned from raiding a village and has brought home a girl he has had his eyes on. She has no kin so no one is coming after her. Atretes, a fellow barbarian now turned to Christian and the rightful chief of the village, sees the hopeless situation. Roth has nothing to offer for a wife. The girl has nothing to offer in a marriage covenant. Their potential life won't be recognized as a marriage and*

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others may attempt to use her for themselves. So Atretes takes his own dagger and gives it to the girl, saying "For Roth." Then he takes two family horses and marches them out to Roth and gives him the reins. Then he pushes the two together in public. They exchange gifts, the marriage is official and protected. That's a picture of God here in Leviticus: Israel has nothing, and God is her bridegroom who gives her the dowry for her to give him. That's how much God is in love with humans who bear his image!

◆ This is reemphasized in the next verse: Leviticus 17:10-15...

You don't eat meat with blood in it, because the blood stands for the power of life. Pagans sometimes drink blood to get the power of life. But no, life is sacred. Life belongs to God and God alone. You don't take it from another. You can't get it for yourself. Only God has authority over life.

◆ **B.** What do we learn? All life belongs to God. My life belongs to God. And any life after death comes only by the grace of an atoning God. All I need do is accept the gift with a believing heart. I can honor the gift of life by respecting life! Christians are to be on the forefront of protecting life, all life. Not because we are brothers to the wolf or elk, but because God owns life. Last week the US House passed a bill to stop the USDA from killing kittens after experimenting on them! The Kittens in Traumatic Testing Ends Now -- or KITTEN – Act was greeted with joy, as now a little over a dozen kittens would be "adopted" instead.

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Ironically, fully half of this same House of Representatives could not bring themselves to sign the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which would make it illegal to let a birthed baby die in what's now called "after birth abortion." Followers of Christ have no option but to hold life sacred; life of rainforests, wildlife, house pets, and especially of human life.

◆**Conclusion:** America may run on Dunkin, but the human engine was made to run on God. For a sinner to live in God's house costs blood. This is the understanding of Leviticus which makes Leviticus foundational to the New Testament theology. For when Jesus our savior came, it was his blood that was drained out to atone for ours. As the Apostle Paul put it,

◆*"So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:8-10, NIV.*