1717 BIBLE STUDIES

"Your Word Is Truth" (John 17:17)

OVERVIEW

Study: Leviticus–Deuteronomy
Theme: Wholly His

Overview: God's chosen people are holy and wholly his—set apart for him and entirely devoted to him. In this unit, students will learn from Moses' preaching in Deuteronomy and the holiness code of Leviticus what it means to be God's chosen people, his holy nation, his treasured possession, and his beloved ones.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery.**



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

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INTRODUCTION

Author

Jewish and Christian tradition credit Moses with writing the first five books of the Bible, including Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Leviticus repeatedly introduces its laws with the words, "The Lord said to Moses" (Leviticus 1:1; 4:1), and Deuteronomy records that "Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests" (Deuteronomy 31:9).

Audience

Leviticus was given to Israel and its priests at Mount Sinai after God redeemed his people from Egypt. Deuteronomy contains Moses' farewell sermons to the next generation of Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.

Date

The events of Leviticus took place during Israel's first year after the exodus. Moses delivered the sermons of Deuteronomy about 40 years later, shortly before his death, on the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho (Deuteronomy 1:3-5; 34:1). Many conservative scholars date the exodus around 1446 BC.

Setting

In Leviticus, Israel was camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, where God gave instructions about offerings, the priesthood, and holy living, and where God's fire consumed the offering at the consecration of the priests (Leviticus 9:23, 24). In Deuteronomy, Israel stood on the threshold of the Promised Land, and Moses reminded them of God's law, God's love, and the choice between life and death.

Theme

God's people are wholly his. "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). God chose Israel not because they were numerous or deserving but because he loved them and kept his oath (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8). They were to be his treasured possession, a holy nation that reflected his character by loving him with all their heart and caring for others.

Why Study Leviticus and Deuteronomy?

These books show what it means to belong to God. Through Christ, believers are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9). This study calls believers to walk as God's holy people, to seek the God who wants to be found, and to love him with all their heart because he first loved them.

Note to Leader

You and your group will notice some changes in our approach to these Bible study questions. We are introducing a model of Bible study that encourages individuals and groups/classes to grow spiritually, bear fruit, and multiply. The study takes your group through a God-honoring and God-exalting process in which people will directly engage with God's Word; it is a discipleship tool that consistently works with seekers, young Christians, and more mature believers alike. For a rationale for this type of study, more information on the process and how to lead it, and what you should communicate to your group to make this study most effective, please go to www.ChristianStandard.com/Discovery.

STUDY CONTENT

WEEK 1: Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 7:6-9; 4:5-9; Leviticus 9:23, 24

WEEK 2: Deuteronomy 28:9, 10; Leviticus 22:31-33; 19:1, 2, 9-18

WEEK 3: Deuteronomy 4:29-40; 26:17-19; Leviticus 20:26; 26:12, 13

WEEK 4: Deuteronomy 30:4-6, 11-14; Leviticus 26:40-42

WEEK ONE

LESSON AIM: **Because he is holy, walk as his holy people.**

STUDY: Leviticus–Deuteronomy

THEME: Wholly His

LESSON TEXT: Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 7:6-9; 4:5-9; Leviticus 9:23, 24

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Peter 2:9, 10; Colossians 3:11-17

HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

BY MARK SCOTT

God's chosen people are holy and wholly his. They are to be set apart for him (holy) and entirely devoted to him (wholly his). At times we have emphasized the "purity" side of holiness but have failed to emphasize the "possession" side of it. To be holy is to live with the moral excellence of God himself. But to be holy also is to realize that we belong to him. He is our very great possession and inheritance, and we are his peculiar people.

The next four lessons emphasize how God's people are to be "wholly his." The texts are from Moses' preaching (Deuteronomy) and from the code that uses "holiness" more than any other book in the Bible (Leviticus).

As the people were getting ready to cross the Jordan into the land of promise, Moses reminded them of God's law (Deuteronomy 5), God's heart (6), God's love (7), God's word (8), and God's discipline (9). God then commanded Moses to cut two new stone tablets since Moses had broken the first ones (Deuteronomy 10:2) and to make sure the law traveled with Israel in their journeys in the ark box. God's purpose was to ensure that Israel's wholeness was located in God himself.

Israel's Choice Was Due to God's Greatness and Goodness

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

In language similar to that of the prophet Micah (6:8), Moses reminded Israel of what God *required* (asked) of them. Basically God asked Israel to do five things (and these greatly overlap): to *fear* (reverence) God, *obey* God, *love* God with everything, *serve* (work for) God, and *observe* (heed or retain) God's commands and decrees.

In doing these five things, Israel would not make a name for themselves. They would simply make God's name great. After all, the heavens and the earth belong to him. He is *God of gods and Lord of lords*. He is *mighty* (strong) and *awesome* (fearsome). He has shown himself to be good. He plays no favorites (even though he chose Israel) and accepts no bribes. He defends the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner by giving them food and clothing. And, after all, the Lord performed miracles for Israel (*great and awesome wonders*).

God wanted Israel to demonstrate his greatness and goodness to show his *affection* (mercy) toward them; in other words, to love the foreigner, fear the Lord and serve him, hold him fast, and take oaths in his name. God helped Israel multiply from a family of 70 (cf. Exodus 1:5; Acts 7:14, 15) to a nation as numerous as the stars.

Israel's Greatness Was Due to God's Promises

Deuteronomy 7:6-9; 4:5-9

God's promises were not given to Israel because Israel was so compliant, intelligent, shrewd, or numerous. The promises of God were rooted in his consistent character. At least three fulfilled promises are highlighted in these two sections of Scripture. First, to make Israel his *treasured possession* the Lord kept his oath to Israel of "redemption." God *redeemed* (ransomed or paid a price for) Israel from the land of slavery.

God's second promise was that of his covenant. The Lord's *covenant of love* established an agreement between God and his people. Israel did not have to wonder about how this covenant worked because the third promise was that of revelation. God's unveiling of himself to Israel came through his law. The law of God (specifically given in the Ten Commandments) made known his mind, will, and way. As Israel would observe these laws, they would demonstrate God's *wisdom and understanding* to the nations. In this sense the law became an avenue of evangelism. The nations would respond, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Unlike the gods of other nations, God's people have a God who is *near* them. The Lord's righteous decrees and laws were set before Israel so Israel could perpetuate God's promises to the generations to come. Diligence in maintaining the promises of God would help Israel to prevent God's laws to fade from the peoples' hearts.

Israel's Glory Was Due to God's Power

Leviticus 9:23, 24

The first seven chapters of Leviticus marked out the various offerings and sacrifices to the Lord. Leviticus 8 and 9 dealt with the consecration of the priests. These last two verses of chapter 9 are the epilogue of these two chapters. When Moses and Aaron came out of the tent of meeting, they blessed the people and God put on a display of his power. God's purifying fire from heaven was his stamp of approval for the sacrifices made. When the people witnessed this power they shouted for joy and fell facedown. What else could his chosen people do?

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WE COME FROM DIFFERENT PLACES

BY DAVID FAUST

My wife, Candy, volunteers with a ministry in our church called English Talk Time. Neighbors from Japan, Korea, Brazil, China, and other nations come to our church building each Wednesday morning to learn conversational English. It's a practical way to assist our neighbors, but it leads to some humorous verbal exchanges.

When your friends speak little English, how do you explain to them the difference between "aisle," "isle," and "I'll"? Why can you read the same book today that you read yesterday, although *read* is spelled the same but pronounced differently each time? If you order roast duck in a restaurant, of course the duck doesn't have a bill—but you will get a bill for the meal, which you can pay with a $50 bill to the waiter named Bill.

Differences of language and culture have challenged the human race since the tower of Babel. When my family lived near New York City, church meals featured Italian pasta dishes served alongside Filipino, Chinese, Greek, and Puerto Rican specialties. It was a prescription for international heartburn, but our congregation's ethnic diversity also was a foretaste of Heaven. We found a bond of cross-cultural unity at the feet of Jesus.

Blessing All Nations

God chose Israel to receive unique privileges and to fulfill a special mission, but his ultimate purpose was to bless all nations. God's love for all people groups shines throughout the Bible. For example,

- Non-Jewish people often lived among the Israelites, and God's law included provisions to protect and assist them (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33, 34).
- The Lord told the Hebrews that he "defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:18).
- He said to "love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19).
- God healed the Syrian soldier, Naaman (2 Kings 5).
- God showed grace to Nineveh, the center of Assyria's terrorist war machine (Jonah 3).
- The psalms invite "all the peoples" to praise God and urge all nations to "be glad and sing for joy" (Psalm 67:3, 4).
- Non-Jews with rough-edged stories, like Rahab and Ruth, appear in the human lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1:5).
- Jesus crossed cultural lines by showing grace to Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians, Roman centurions, and Greeks.
- Jesus said to make disciples of all ethnic groups and spread his good news everywhere (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).
- The early church sacrificially sent missionaries to search for God's lost sheep in far-flung nations of the earth.
- In Heaven, people "from every nation, tribe, people and language" praise God together (Revelation 7:9).

These scriptural principles remind us to open our eyes and recognize God's image in everyone we meet. And to open our hearts and put ourselves in others' shoes. And to open our homes and our churches, recognizing that in the battle for souls, kindness and hospitality are powerful secret weapons.

We all come from different places—geographically, generationally, culturally, socially—but we are all sinners, and we are all loved by God. By his grace, we can find our true identity by being baptized into the family of faith where there "is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27, 28).

Personal Challenge:

This week, consider how you can develop a bond of cross-cultural unity at the feet of Jesus with someone. Begin with prayer for that person and that God will give you the opportunity.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In what specific ways over the last week did you testify to someone about the things Jesus has done in your life?

2. What are you most grateful for this week?

   Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the two readers to each read **Deuteronomy 10:12-22** in turn (possibly from different Bible versions) and then ask the group what they observe in the passage. What captured their attention? Next, ask the same two readers to each read **Deuteronomy 7:6-9**, and once again ask for observations. Repeat the process with **Deuteronomy 4:5-9**, and again with **Leviticus 9:23, 24**. Ask the third person to summarize (not interpret) what all four of these passages are saying as a whole. (Don't try to capture everything!)

3. What most stands out to you in these passages?

4. Let's look closer at some of the details in these passages:
   - What does God call his people to know and remember?
   - What does God call people to do or change?
   - What are some of the results when people follow God completely?

5. Go through the passages and list all the words or phrases used to describe God and what he has done. (Take your time on this and the next question. There's a lot to process here!)
   - Which ones are used most or stand out to you?
   - What do these descriptions teach you about God?

6. Now list all the words or phrases that describe God's people.
   - How would you summarize what God thinks and how he feels about his people?
   - What do you learn about yourself from these passages?

7. Look at the various ways God calls his people to obedience.
   - Which one(s) do you struggle with the most, and why?
   - Which will you seek, with God's power, to obey this week?

8. What mission to surrounding nations, peoples, or groups did God give to his people in these passages?
   - What people groups might God be calling you to love, serve, and tell about Jesus?
   - What specifically might God be calling our group to do for them in his great name? How can we serve them?

9. Based on this passage and our discussion, complete this sentence: I [or we] will . . .

10. What challenge do you anticipate facing this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect this week on **Deuteronomy 28:9, 10; Leviticus 22:31-33; and Leviticus 19:1, 2, 9-18**, as we continue our study about being "Wholly His." You can also read next week's supplemental Bible texts as well as the Study and Application sections in *Christian Standard* as part of your own personal study.

WEEK TWO

LESSON AIM: **Because he is holy, walk as his holy people.**

STUDY: Leviticus–Deuteronomy

THEME: Wholly His

LESSON TEXT: Deuteronomy 28:9, 10; Leviticus 22:31-33; 19:1, 2, 9-18

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Ephesians 1:3-6; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:4, 5

HIS HOLY NATION

BY MARK SCOTT

Has this exchange happened in your family? Dad says, "Son, take out the trash." The son says, "Why do I have to take out the trash?" Dad says, "Because if you don't, the house will stinketh, and your mom won't be happy." The son continues to complain and keeps asking, "Why?" Finally dad says, "Because I'm your father."

What does dad's identity have to do with the son's obedience? Everything in the world.

It was the same for Israel. The behavior of God's "holy nation" was inextricably linked to the Lord's unique identity and his redemptive activity on their behalf. All of these various commands find their common denominator in the phrase, "I am the Lord" (a phrase that occurs eight times in our selected texts). We continue in our study of the legal (covenantal or constitutional) literature of the Old Testament (Deuteronomy and Leviticus) to learn what it means to be "wholly his."

His Holy Nation Presents an Accurate View of God

Deuteronomy 28:9, 10; Leviticus 22:31-33

The possibility of presenting an inaccurate view of God should scare any godly leader. Moses did that in bringing water from the rock, and his act kept him from entering the holy land (Numbers 20:10-13; Deuteronomy 3:23-26). Paul was concerned he might preach to others but end up being disqualified himself (1 Corinthians 9:27). But all Christians —not just leaders—should be concerned about God's name being blasphemed among unbelievers by committing ungodly behavior (Romans 2:24).

Deuteronomy 28 marked out for Israel the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. The covenant-making God promised Israel four blessings. He would *establish* (stand or cause to rise) Israel as he promised. He would make the peoples on earth fear Israel. He would make the people holy. And finally, he would redeem them from Egyptian slavery.

But these promises went hand-in-hand with Israel's cooperation. Leviticus 22 marked out the consecration of the priests and Israel's offerings. These last verses of the chapter make it clear what Israel was to do. They would be called upon to *keep the commands* (Leviticus 22:31; Deuteronomy 28:9) of God by following him. They would be expected to *walk in obedience* (or walk in his ways). They would not be allowed to *profane* (pollute or defile) the Lord's name. And they would need to *acknowledge* (make holy) God himself.

His Holy Nation Promotes a Generous View toward Others

Leviticus 19:1, 2, 9-18

Leviticus 18–19 is known as Israel's code of holiness. Like Deuteronomy 6, it is a high-water mark of the Old Testament. At the heart of it (as in right in the middle) is the command that Peter quoted in the New Testament, "Be holy because I am holy" (Leviticus 19:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:16).

God called Israel to be proactive in seeking the goodwill of others. Holiness is not limited to moral goodness; holiness also seeks justice for others. These laws can be thought of in terms of helping, "truthing" (Ephesians 4:15), fulfilling, defending, and advocating.

God's holy nation helps others. When harvest comes, the reapers do not reap the edges of the field, and they do not make a second pass through the vineyard. They leave them for the poor and the foreigner. The Hebrew word for *foreigner* is *ger* (pronounced similar to "care"). God's people are to "care" for the "ger."

God's holy nation makes truth telling a high priority. They do not lie or *swear falsely* (same word as lie). Profaning God's name has nothing to do with mispronouncing his divine name. But it does have to do with integrity of speech. This means not to deceive anyone or spread slander among God's people.

God's holy nation fulfills goodwill toward others. Moses came at this in negative and positive ways. Negatively, God's people do not *steal* (violate others by taking) or rob, nor do they *defraud* (hold back things due to others). Positively, they pay their day workers on the day of their work. There are no prolonged IOUs.

God's holy nation defends others. Cursing a deaf person? How could they hear the curse? Place a stumbling block in front of a blind person? How would they not trip? God's people do not pervert justice or play favorites; God's people judge fairly.

God's holy nation advocates for one another. They do not *endanger* (or fail to stand up for) their neighbor. They certainly do not hate their neighbor. If a *rebuke* is necessary, they reason or plead tenderly with their neighbor so that sin is not incurred. And finally, they do not seek revenge or bear a grudge. Being holy is quite far-reaching and comprehensive.

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DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

BY DAVID FAUST

Don't libel me with labels. Don't put me into a cultural box. I have rooted for the Cincinnati Reds most of my life, but my main identity isn't "sports fan." I'm a baby boomer, but generational labels don't tell you everything about me or my builder, gen X, and millennial friends.

I have experienced what Scripture calls the new birth, but I prefer not to be called "a born-again Christian" as if that's something strange. In the first century there wasn't any other kind. I am part of the catholic (small "c") church consisting of believers all over the world who love the Lord, but please don't label me a Catholic. I join my voice with all who protest the errors they find in the Roman Catholic church, but I don't consider myself a Protestant either.

The church's beginning on the Day of Pentecost excites me, but please don't call me Pentecostal. I believe the Holy Spirit indwells me and bestows *charismata*—gifts for building up the body of Christ—on all God's people, but don't label me charismatic. I believe everything the Bible says about baptism, but I'm not a Baptist. I like the slogan that says, "We are not the only Christians, but we are Christians only."

No social cause, political party, or religious denomination owns my highest allegiance. By God's grace I am a believer, a child of the King, an imperfect follower of the perfect Lord—a disciple apprenticed to Jesus for life. Even though I often stumble, I'm trying to walk with God. I am Christ's servant—first, foremost, forever.

I am committed to the fundamentals of "the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people" (Jude 3), but please don't call me a fundamentalist. I believe in evangelism, but today the word *evangelical* has a lot of baggage associated with it. God's inspired book deserves far more attention than blogs, podcasts, and buzzwords. "Foolish and stupid arguments . . . produce quarrels" (2 Timothy 2:23), but the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection changes lives.

I appreciate the heritage of faith passed along by previous generations of believers. I have benefited from the wisdom of Luther, Wesley, Campbell, Stone, and many others, but like me, these leaders didn't have flawless judgment. I refuse to align myself exclusively with any group that substitutes human dogma for God's Word, promotes ideas that needlessly divide the church, and further confuses unbelievers. Being nondenominational doesn't give me the right to push my own unwritten creeds and ironclad opinions that would make me just as sectarian and destructive as the unscriptural divisions I reject.

I refuse to jump on the bandwagon for the latest faith-fad, parrot the coolest celebrity author/preacher, or throw all my energy into debating cultural controversies that are hot today but will be forgotten tomorrow. I believe God wants me to pursue holiness more than trendiness, and I'm still learning what it means "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

So I challenge you: Resist the libel of the label. Dare to be different. In a world that's falling apart, let God's presence set you apart. Be free in Christ. Be faithful to him. Be a Christian only, and "praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:16).

Personal Challenge:

In your journal or on a sheet of paper, write specifically how you will choose to live out the challenges to resist the libel of the label, dare to be different, let God's presence set you apart, and the others listed above.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Over the past week, what person or group of people did you love, serve, and/or tell about Jesus?

2. What was challenging for you this past week?

   Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the two readers to each read **Deuteronomy 28:9, 10** in turn (possibly from different Bible versions) and then ask the group what they observe in the passage. What captured their attention? Then ask the same two readers to each read **Leviticus 22:31-33**, and once again ask for observations. Repeat the process with **Leviticus 19:1, 2, 9-18**. Ask the third person to summarize (not interpret) what all three passages are saying as a whole. (Don't try to capture everything!)

3. After hearing all three of these passages together, what most stands out to you?

4. What behaviors do you see in these passages that provide examples of being like God and exhibiting holiness?
   - How would you summarize the list of laws in Leviticus 19:9-18?
   - What are the outcomes when God's people are holy and walk in his ways?

5. What do you learn about God's character from these passages?

6. What do these passages reveal to you about God's design of and expectations for his people?

7. In what ways do you sense God is calling you to obey him and live a holy life this week?
   - How might you influence or impact the people around you who are still far from God by living a holy life as described in these passages?

8. Based on these passages and our discussion, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . .

9. What challenge will you face this week as you seek to live a godly life?

For Next Week: Sometime this week, read and reflect on **Deuteronomy 4:29-40; 26:17-19; and Leviticus 20:26; 26:12, 13** as we continue to look at how we can be "Wholly His." You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your own personal study. (We won't read or discuss extra study materials in our group session next week, but they will help you grow in your own faith.)

WEEK THREE

LESSON AIM: **Because you are his, seek him and you will find him.**

STUDY: Leviticus–Deuteronomy

THEME: Wholly His

LESSON TEXT: Deuteronomy 4:29-40; 26:17-19; Leviticus 20:26; 26:12, 13

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 1:6, 7; Ephesians 1:13-16

HIS TREASURED POSSESSION

BY MARK SCOTT

God is good at only one part of hide-and-seek. He does not hide well. In fact, he wants to be found (Psalm 19:1-6; Acts 17:27; Romans 1:20; Matthew 7:8). But God is very good at the other part of the game: finding. He is always willing to search for what is lost (Genesis 3:9; Luke 15:4-7). He does this because his people are his *treasured* (peculiar, special, valued) *possession*.

His People Are Treasured Because of His Compassion

Deuteronomy 4:29-31

Deuteronomy 4 shows the contrast between Israel worshipping the Lord and the nations worshipping vain idols. God wanted Israel to *seek* (mentioned twice; it means "to desire" or "inquire of") him with heart and soul (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). Even if Israel found themselves in *distress* (trouble or tribulation), they were given the privilege of returning to and obeying the Lord.

The reason Israel could do these things was because of God's mercy. The word *merciful* means compassion like the kind a mother gives to a child. This mercy caused God not to *abandon* (withdraw), *destroy* (ruin), or *forget* his covenant to his people. The reason God would not do these things is because he *confirmed it by oath* (a phrase that appears 16 times in Deuteronomy). He can swear by himself because he is God (Hebrews 6:13).

His People Are Treasured Because of His Exclusion

Deuteronomy 4:32-40

Israel needed only to ask their forefathers about God's uniqueness. I mean, who is like God? No one can compare with him. He is Creator. God challenged them to ask the far ends of the universe, "Is anyone quite like their God?" Who else had heard the voice of God? What other people on earth had seen God via fire and lived to tell it (Exodus 14:24)? What other people on earth had been *brought out* (or delivered) from their enemies via miracles (Exodus 7–14)?

What other nation on earth heard God's actual voice and experienced his *discipline* (correction or reproof)? What other people were so chosen? What other God could cast out greater and stronger nations and give Israel the land of promise? The answer is, no one. God is God, and *there is no other* (mentioned twice in this text). His exclusivity is what made Israel God's treasured possession.

This is why Israel was to acknowledge God and take to heart that God is God. This is why Israel was to keep his *decrees* (customs) and commands. God longed for it to go well for Israel. God's desire for Israel was simple—live long in the land of promise.

His People Are Treasured Because of His Separation

Deuteronomy 26:17-19; Leviticus 20:26

Since God is holy (separate or distinct or other) he *separated* (divided) his people from other peoples so it would be clear that Israel belonged to the Lord. The context of Leviticus 20 is about God punishing the nations for their idolatry.

In contrast to the nations that worship idols, God was going to take Israel at their word. They would not worship other gods. Instead they *declared* (said) they would walk in obedience, keep his decrees, commands, and laws. This would be possible for them since they would give God their undivided attention (i.e., *listen to him*) and bring to God their tithes and offerings (the larger context of Deuteronomy 26). Since Israel declared for God, then God would "declare" for them. In fact, he would do more than declare for them. He would set them in *praise, fame, and honor* above other nations. "Set in praise" actually just means "praise." God would praise his people. God would make them famous (i.e., give them a good reputation among the nations). God is distinct among the so-called gods, and Israel is distinct because God is their God.

His People Are Treasured Because of His Redemption

Leviticus 26:12, 13

This idea of redemption has been mentioned in our earlier sections, but it is the heart of this section. Four expressions are used to describe this redemption. God *brought them out* of Egypt. He made them no longer *slaves* (bondservants). He broke the bars of Egypt's *yoke*. And he enabled Israel to *walk with heads held high* (literally, "made you walk erect").

Since God's people are God's treasured possession and his inheritance (Ephesians 1:18), believers might want to ask, "How much of a gift are we to God?" For Israel, part of being a treasured possession meant inheriting the Promised Land. For the church, part of being a treasured possession means to inherit God himself.

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IT'S NEVER QUITE ENOUGH

BY DAVID FAUST

At age 86, Jackie Long died from injuries sustained in a car accident—an abrupt end to a fruitful life. Jackie worked tirelessly on our church staff for four decades, and then after retiring in her sixties, she continued to serve cheerfully as a volunteer for another 20 years. She welcomed guests, cared for those in need, coordinated countless weddings and funerals, took meals to shut-ins, ministered with senior adults, and volunteered with benevolence agencies in our city.

Hundreds gathered at the funeral to honor Jackie's life and faith. I reminded the crowd about Lazarus's sister Martha, who expressed annoyance because she had to take care of all the cooking and household preparations, while her sister, Mary, sat listening quietly to the Lord. Jesus insisted, "Mary has chosen what is better" (Luke 10:42), but whenever I read that story, part of me sympathizes with Martha. Clearly Mary made the better choice, but somebody had to feed all those hungry disciples!

What if a person could emulate the best of both Mary and Martha? What if, like Martha, she took care of all the practical details, and at the same time, like Mary, she recognized the importance of sitting reverently at Jesus' feet and learning from him? "That was Jackie Long," I told the crowd at the funeral. "She was like Mary, and she was like Martha."

Jackie's funeral service lasted about an hour—a short time to summarize such a long, eventful life. While driving back from the cemetery, I pondered how a one-hour service simply wasn't long enough to do justice to Jackie's lifetime of faithful service. But then, isn't that the way it is with all funeral services? When you think about the significance of a person's lifetime, even the most elaborate funeral is never fully adequate.

Nothing in this life lasts quite long enough.

- A bride and groom spend months preparing for their wedding day, only to discover the ceremony takes only a few minutes, the honeymoon is quickly over, and the realities of married life soon settle in.
- Recent college graduates, weary of the demands of school, soon realize all of the classes they completed and all of the books they read weren't enough to fully prepare them for all the real-life challenges they will face in the workplace.
- A happily married couple discovers that even 50 years together isn't long enough. It causes deep grief when a beloved spouse dies.
- A worker builds a successful career and amasses enough money to enjoy a comfortable retirement. Yet, as the ancient philosopher observed, "a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune" (Ecclesiastes 2:21).

Let's face it: Life on this earth always leaves us a bit unsatisfied. C. S. Lewis wisely observed, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." Here on earth we never have quite enough time. That's why we need to store up our treasures in Heaven. There alone we will find lasting fulfillment. As God's treasured possession, we will serve the Lord without limitation and enjoy him forever in a world without end.

Personal Challenge:

In your journal or on a sheet of paper, write down what being "made for another world" means to you on an everyday basis. How will remembering that change the way you live and love today and tomorrow?

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What challenges did you face this past week?

2. Over the last seven days, what impact on people around you did you make simply by living a holy life?

   Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the two readers to each read **Deuteronomy 4:29-40** in turn (possibly from different Bible versions) and then ask the group what they observe in the passage. What captured their attention? Repeat this process with **Deuteronomy 26:17-19**, and once again with **Leviticus 20:26; 26:12, 13**. Ask the third person to take about one minute to summarize all three passages as a whole. (Don't try to capture everything!)

3. After hearing all three of these passages together, what stands out to you most?

4. Let's look at these passages in more detail:
   - What reminders of what God has done for his people do you see?
   - What promises from God do you see?
   - What responses does God ask his people to make in return?
   - What are God's purposes for his promises and how we respond to him? (Hint, look for the phrase, "so that" [in the *New International Version*].)

5. What do you learn about God in these passages?

6. What do you learn about people, especially how God views us?
   - What specific difference does it make in your life to be assured you are God's treasured possession?

7. As you live as God's treasured possession this week, what is one specific way you will seek to "walk in obedience"?

8. Think of your friends, family, and co-workers who are distressed or discouraged and need to know this great love of God. With whom of those will you share this lesson this week?

9. Based on this passage and our discussion, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . .

10. What will be a challenge for you this week even as you live as a treasured possession of God?

For Next Week: Sometime this week, read and reflect on **Deuteronomy 30:4-6, 11-14 and Leviticus 26:40-42** as we continue to look at being "Wholly His." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your own personal study.

WEEK FOUR

LESSON AIM: **Because he loves you, love him with all your heart!**

STUDY: Leviticus–Deuteronomy

THEME: Wholly His

LESSON TEXT: Deuteronomy 30:4-6, 11-14; Leviticus 26:40-42

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Matthew 22:36-40; John 15:9-12; Romans 10:5-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21

HIS BELOVED ONES

BY MARK SCOTT

It is hard to improve the lyrics in the hymn "The Love of God" when verse 3 says,

> *Could we with ink the ocean fill,*
> *And were the skies of parchment made;*
> *Were every stalk on earth a quill,*
> *And every man a scribe by trade;*
> *To write the love of God above,*
> *Would drain the ocean dry;*
> *Nor could the scroll contain the whole,*
> *Though stretched from sky to sky.*

It is equally hard to improve the selected texts for today in their emphasis on the reality that God's people are truly his "beloved ones." God's love brought Israel back from her banishment in distant lands. God's love brought Israel near by making his revelation so available to her. God's love brought Israel through their rebellion and sin to make good on his covenant.

God's Love Brought Israel Back

Deuteronomy 30:4-6

Moses was concluding his sermons to Israel on the plains of Moab before God's people crossed over to the Promised Land. He reminded them yet again that if they just returned to God upon the occasions of their unfaithfulness, God would bring them home. Even if God had *banished* (cast out) them to the most distant land (what the Leviticus text called *the land of their enemies*), he would *gather* (assemble) them and bring them back. No place under the heavens is beyond the reach of the love of God.

God would make good on his promise to bring Israel back to the land that belonged to their ancestors. In the Leviticus text, the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were specifically mentioned. But God would not only bring Israel back, and bring them back to the specific land of their forefathers, God would also make Israel *prosperous* (better or pleasing) in that land—even more so than their forefathers.

But this stubborn love of God that brings people back to him has a purpose. God does not intend that his people just go on sinning that grace may abound (Romans 6:1). God's love has a cleansing purpose and moral goal. God would *circumcise* the hearts of his people; he always intended that circumcision would go beyond the physical dimension (Romans 2:28, 29). The result of this "deep cut" is that his people would love him back with heart and soul (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5).

God's Love Brought Israel Near

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Any good preacher will anticipate the contraries (objections or pushbacks) of the audience. Moses probably thought, as he was getting ready to make his invitational appeal to Israel by urging them to "choose life," that some might say, "This is all too hard. I don't understand what God expects of us." Moses met that objection head-on.

God's message to Israel was not too *difficult* (hard or even wonderful). It was not beyond their reach. Two portions of creation were chosen by Moses with which to illustrate: the heavens and the sea. Was God's message so high that it demanded someone's ascent into heaven to get it? Was God's message so far away that someone would have to cross the sea to get it? Not at all. God's message (in the context, a message of life and love) was actually *near* (closer than a cousin). It was so close it was in their mouths and hearts.

God desired to stamp his own image deep on their hearts. The law was intended to go all the way to their bones. The secret things belonged to the Lord, but the revealed things were intended to be embraced, understood, and implemented (Deuteronomy 29:29). Interestingly enough, Paul quoted this passage in Romans 10:6-8 concerning how we are saved. Salvation is really rather simple—even though it is profound. One confesses with one's mouth Jesus' lordship and believes in one's heart in Jesus' resurrection. That message is so simple a child can understand it. The message is near.

God's Love Brought Israel Through

Leviticus 26:40-42

What did God's love bring Israel through? Through sin! Bringing Israel back to the Promised Land was great. (By the way, many people who love Jesus interpret these verses from these texts as referring to the literal land of Israel during the literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus as supposedly taught in Revelation 20:1-3.) Maybe bringing Israel near God's message was grand. But bringing Israel through their sin and redeeming them was joy unspeakable.

If the people will confess their sins, humble themselves, and *pay for their sins* (make amends or please the Lord), then God will remember his covenant. God will bring Israel through their sins and remember those sins no more (Psalm 103:12).

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THE NATURAL RESPONSE TO BEING LOVED

BY DAVID FAUST

What would you say if someone asked, "Is it difficult to be a Christian?" Might your answer be both yes and no?

On the one hand, Christ already did the hardest part. He accomplished what we could never do for ourselves. He lived a perfect life and suffered for our transgressions on the cross. We sinners could never measure up to all the righteous standards of God, but his love overflows and his grace is sufficient in spite of our imperfections. "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). To receive this gift, we must come to the Lord empty-handed, poor in spirit. In humble, repentant faith we come like the Ethiopian who heard the good news of Jesus, eagerly asked to be baptized, and afterward "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:34-39). For us, that's the easy part.

But here's the hard part. In the words of G. K. Chesterton, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). What is the cost of following Jesus? Everything! Dying daily. Picking up an instrument of death. Denying yourself absolute individual autonomy and choosing God's will ahead of your own. By confessing that "Jesus Christ is Lord," you agree, "I am not my own boss anymore"—a difficult decision indeed. Why would anyone want to do that?

Because of love.

Love makes us do things we would never do otherwise. Love causes a mother to endure the pain of childbirth and make countless sacrifices for the well-being of her children. Love enables a married couple to stick together through thick and thin. It motivates soldiers to lay down their lives for their country. Love compels ministers and elders to faithfully shepherd their flocks even when the work is exhausting and the sheep seem hard-hearted and unappreciative. Love is the root of other noble virtues like loyalty, honesty, and kindness.

Why go to church services on the Lord's Day? Because we're trying to earn God's favor? Because leaders browbeat us into feeling guilty if we don't show up? No, we worship God because he first loved us. Love for the body of Christ moves us to join together, sharing our spiritual gifts in worship and mutual encouragement.

Why give money back to God? We aren't trying to buy his blessings. We're motivated because God has given so generously to us. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7) because he is a cheerful giver.

Moses laid down the Law to the people of Israel, but even under the old Hebrew covenant, obedience was supposed to be motivated by love. God's commands, Moses insisted, are "not too difficult for you or beyond your reach"; they are intended for anyone who will "turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 30:10, 11).

Following Jesus may sound like the most demanding, difficult adventure imaginable, but it's a natural response. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15), because the noblest and most effective motivator isn't coercion, control, or even our own self-interest. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Personal Challenge:

Imagine a non-Christian friend asking you if it's difficult being a Christian. In your journal or on a sheet of paper, write your response in your own words.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What "win" stories from this past week do you have about living out godliness?

2. What were your biggest challenges last week?

   Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—to help. Ask the two readers to each read **Deuteronomy 30:4-6** in turn (possibly from different Bible versions) and then ask the group what they observe in the passage. What captured their attention? Then ask the same two readers to each read **Deuteronomy 30:11-14**, and once again ask for observations. Finally, ask the readers to each read **Leviticus 26:40-42**, and again ask for comments. Ask the third person to summarize (not interpret) what all three passages are saying as a whole. (Don't try to capture everything!) Take about 60 seconds for this part.

3. Let's look more closely at the details:
   - List what God says he will do for his people.
   - What are the people's responsibilities?
   - In what ways does God offer his help and support?

4. What do you learn about God's character from these passages?

5. What do you learn about the needs of people in general?
   - What do you learn about your own needs as they relate to living for God?

6. What do these passages teach you about what it takes to obey God's commands on a daily basis?

7. This week, with whom in your spheres of influence will you share the insights you've learned from this passage?

8. Based on these passages, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . .

9. What will be a challenge for you this week as you seek to love and obey the Lord?

For Next Week: This week's lesson brings this unit of study to a conclusion. Look for additional "1717: Your Word Is Truth" studies, for use with your Sunday School classes, small groups, or personal studies, at ChristianStandard.com.