



The Lord Makes You Holy

Leviticus 22:1-3, 9-10, 14-21, 31-33

God commands, "Be holy." And He says, "I make you holy."

God is entirely unique, set apart from all others. Let me illustrate. In Congo (Brazzaville), Madame Jacques's daughter Thérèse cried out, "Mama, I've been bitten by a snake!" Desperate, Madame Jacques strapped her 2-year-old to her back and ran to another village to get prayer from an evangelist, Coco Moïse. But just as she was leaving, she discovered that Thérèse had already stopped breathing. Yet she ran for 3 hours to see Coco Moïse. As they prayed together, Thérèse began breathing! Then Madame Jacques called her husband Jacques. Prophetically, Coco Moïse assured him that the child would recover. The next day she was fine! Now Thérèse is my brother Craig's sister-in-law. She grew up healthy, got a seminary degree, and serves in a church.¹ God is unique. There are things only He can do, like raising the dead. He alone is God. That is what **holy** means—set apart, distinct, separate, unlike any other. There is no match for our God.

*We're going to read select verses from Leviticus 22. Listen for **what is repeated because it is important**:*

Leviticus 22:1-3, 9-10, 14-21, 31-33 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons so that they abstain from the holy things of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they do not profane my holy name: **I am the Lord**. Say to them, 'If any one of all your offspring throughout your generations approaches the holy things that the people of Israel dedicate to the Lord, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: **I am the Lord**..."

⁹"The priests are to keep my requirements so that they do not become guilty and die for treating them with contempt. **I am the LORD, who makes them holy**. No one outside a priest's family may eat the sacred offering, nor may the guest of a priest or his hired worker eat it..."

¹⁴"If anyone eats a sacred offering by mistake, he must make restitution to the priest for the offering and add a fifth of the value to it. The priests must not desecrate the sacred offerings the Israelites present to the LORD by allowing them to eat the sacred offerings and so bring upon them guilt requiring payment. **I am the LORD, who makes them holy.**' "

The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: 'If any of you—either an Israelite or an alien living in Israel—presents a gift for a burnt offering to the LORD, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable..."

³¹"Keep my commands and follow them. **I am the LORD**. Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. **I am the LORD, who makes you holy** and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. **I am the LORD.**' "

"*I am the Lord.*" 9x in chapter 22 alone! 49x in Leviticus! He expects them to listen attentively and do what He says.

"*...Who makes them/you holy.*" 7x! **God** sets the priests apart. Everything special about the priests emanates from God. Holiness transmission is from *God* to *Moses* to *Aaron* to the *people*.



Today we'll see that **God made** Moses, Aaron & his sons, and Israel Holy, and He **commands** them to be holy. Then we'll see that God **made us holy** through Jesus, who **commands** us to be holy, and all of us who believe are, like Aaron & his sons, **priests**.

I. Holiness of Moses & Aaron

A. God symbolized making Aaron & sons **holy** through an elaborate process that imprinted the magnitude of the event into their minds.

1. Leviticus 8: First, Moses consecrated Aaron and sons as priests. There's a *transfer* of holiness from God to Moses, to the priests, and finally to the people.

a. The emphasis was on **obedience**.

i. 6x "Moses did as the Lord commanded."

ii. 7th time "Aaron did as the Lord commanded through Moses." The training in obedience is passed from Moses to Aaron.

b. Priests are set apart from the people as distinctively **holy**.

i. They get special dedicated garments, anointing oil, sacrifices.

ii. Elaborate procedures to install the priests: For example, they consecrated the tabernacle & furnishings & priests with the oil.

c. To be made holy, there had to be **Sacrifices**

i. Bull: Sin offering. To be made holy, their sins had to be paid for. Blood on the altar, burned fat & kidneys, then the body outside the camp. *Outside the camp* because their camp was to be holy, and their sin had to be removed from it.

ii. Ram 1: Blood on the altar—blood made atonement, cleansing the altar upon which the sacrifice was made. Entire offering burnt—sin must be eradicated.

iii. Ram 2: Blood on the priests, altar. Fat & kidneys burnt, wave bread & burn, wave ram breast & eat with the remaining bread.

d. Then they stayed put. **Verse 35**: "You must stay at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days and do what the LORD requires, so you will not die; for that is what I have been commanded." This is serious: "So you will not die"!

e. **8:36** The mantle is transferred from Moses to Aaron & his sons. Instead of saying "Moses did everything the Lord commanded," this 7th time it says, "So **Aaron and his sons** did everything the LORD commanded through Moses."

2. Levit 9: Day 8 of the consecration

a. Bull calf for Aaron's sin

b. Burnt ram

c. Calf and lamb burnt

d. Cow & ram with grain & oil for fellowship



- e. Goat for people's sin. The priests had **two functions**: **Serve God** in praise, and **make atonement** on behalf of the people. They mediated between God & the people.
 - f. **9:6** Why all this: "So that the glory of the Lord may appear to you."
- B. **Be holy**: God not only provides holiness, but He also *commands* holiness.
1. **Levit 19:2** (to all Israel): "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'"
 2. **Levit 20:7-8** "'Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'" **20:26** "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own."
 3. **Levit 21:5-8** "Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the LORD by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy. They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the LORD am holy—I who make you holy." This is repeated in vs 15, "... I am the LORD, who makes him holy." See also 21:23. The priest is holy, and God makes him holy.
- C. Connect the two: How can the Lord command them to be holy, when He makes them holy?
1. They are responsible to obey.
 2. But holiness can only originate from God.
 3. Who is operative here, God or the priests? YES!!! (both!)
 4. It is extremely important to understand that **they** are entirely responsible for obedience, yet **God** is the one who enables that obedience.
 5. Let me illustrate with an example. A man in Columbus, OH, named Rich was a great example of a follower of Jesus for us when we lived there in the 90's. He often prayed to the Lord for Divine appointments. Then he relied totally on God to lead him to someone God was already preparing, to receive friendship with believers and the Gospel message itself. In this sense, he was relying on God. And God often answered his prayers by leading him to people in the most unlikely places. Yet he was eager to take initiative in obedience. After a baptism of a new Chinese believer, we all went out together to a Chinese restaurant to celebrate. He asked the waitress at the restaurant, "Do you know about Jesus?" And he proceeded to share the Gospel with her. He was bold in sharing the Good News. **God** empowered his ministry. **He** obeyed God. There is no conflict between these two.
 6. Another example is when God answered a prayer. This was God's encouragement to me and nothing of my own. About 2 years ago, I was visiting my mom and sister in Ohio and went out for a walk. I felt a need to pray as I walked along (that was my only role in this story), and I asked the Lord, if He willed, to lead me to someone I could pray for, even though the place where I walked was pretty remote and there were only a couple houses there. I passed a couple of police while walking along the trail and said hello. Just as I was near the end of my walk, a man flagged me down



as I walked by and wanted to talk with me; this hardly ever happens. He was concerned about someone who was behaving erratically, and he had just called the police to investigate. He wondered if he should have bothered the police, but he was clearly fearful. As he shared with me, I told him that I was praying and had an opportunity to pray for him about the situation. Then he shared that just a few weeks earlier he had met a couple of guys who were out sharing the Gospel and gave his life to follow Jesus in the shed right there. I was able to encourage him a bit, in between the visits he got from the church guys. But the Lord had encouraged me even more.

7. We'd be remiss to stop with Leviticus, though. Whenever we read the Old Testament, we read it in light of what Jesus said in **Luke 24:27**, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Therefore, we ask, "How does Jesus fulfill this Old Testament text?"

II. Jesus makes you holy.

A. He makes us holy, just as he made the priests in the Old Testament holy.

1. Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-22
2. See from Leviticus: We can't just go marching in front of God *as is*, or we'll die.
3. There must be sacrifice, and the blood makes atonement.
 - a. **Levit 17:11** "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."
 - b. **Heb 9:22** "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."
 - c. Jesus made atonement by His own blood.
4. **Levit 9:23-24** After the priests were installed, the glory of the Lord came and burned up the offering, & the priests fell down to worship.
5. We can see the parallels: Jesus cleanses us and appoints us as priests, and the glory of the Lord comes to us while He consumes us as living sacrifices.

B. Just as God commanded Israel, Jesus commands *us* to be holy, too.

1. **Matthew 5:43-48**. "'You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'"
2. Holy means "Set apart" for the Lord, separate from others. Hence Jesus asks, "What makes you different from others?" Let Him ask **you** this question, "What makes you different from others?"
3. Jesus' summary statement, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," is His restatement of Levit 19:2, "Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy."



4. An example of standing out in a way the world cannot match is Gladys Aylward. Believing that God called her to China, she began saving money by working as a housekeeper for a train ticket from the other side of the Channel through Russia all the way to Northern China. After arriving, she helped an older missionary woman to set up an inn for mule trains passing along the silk road, teaching them Bible stories that they passed along. Later, she served as foot inspector and shared the Gospel in all the nearby villages as she did her official duty. This was during WWII, and she took in many of the children orphaned by the war. She developed a reputation for compassion and soon had 200 children. Later, when it became too dangerous to remain, she trekked with 100 children over the mountains to eventually ride on top of coal in a train to near Xian, where she collapsed into a coma with serious life-threatening illnesses after she had seen them to safety. No one could have done this apart from God. This was a holy life.
- C. (Jesus makes us holy; He commands us to be holy.) Finally, He makes us all **priests**.
1. In Christ, God abolished the distinction among men. That's because in Christ all believers are holy. The transfer now is from God through Jesus directly to us, with no priest in between.
 2. Moses prophesied it: **Exodus 19:5-6a**, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."
 3. Jesus fulfilled it: **1 Peter 2:4-5,9** "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."
 4. **Revelation 5:9-10** " And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.' "

III. Implications for us

- A. The Lord Jesus made you holy.
- B. Be holy, obedient, and faithful.
 1. Treasure & cultivate your relationship with God in Bible study & prayer on your own.
 2. Don't rely solely on church leaders, who are not more priests than you are. Be responsible for your own obedience to God.
 3. Be a **disciple worth reproducing**. Not everything is worth reproducing. A virus isn't worth reproducing. You are not a coronavirus!
- C. We are **priests**—foremost ahead of all other identities (husband, wife, father, mother, engineer, or American). Like the Old Testament priests, we serve two functions.
 1. We **serve in worship** before the glorious Almighty God, like Old Testament priests.



2. There are people outside the Tabernacle. As priests, we **represent God** to them and mediate by the Gospel. You are not God, but you are His children and reveal His character to the world through your lives. Sometimes when I share the Gospel with people, they ask, “Are you a pastor? Are you a priest?” They’re not used to ordinary believers doing the work of the Kingdom. But God uses you and me to transmit holiness from us to those who are far from Him.

II Cor 5:18-6:1 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.

3. Don’t receive God’s grace in vain. You have been saved for a purpose. God calls us to be ambassadors, to bear the message of reconciliation between people and God.

Reproduce!

- a. None of us can save a single person from sin. Only God does that.
- b. Yet He commands us to make disciples—to gently lead those who are far from God into His presence. Obey God, and reproduce obedience.
- c. Jesus rose from the dead. He sent the Holy Spirit. It is by His grace and His Spirit that we can do what is impossible to do if we rely on ourselves.
- d. Making disciples takes patience and perseverance. We want to be like a sailboat—put up sails to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Practice telling stories about what God has done in your life with other believers, so you can do it with nonbelievers.
 - ii. Practice sharing the Gospel in different formats.
 - iii. Refine your listening skills.
 - iv. Practice telling Bible stories.
 - v. Invite people you know to read the Bible together and discover what it says about their lives. If someone says “Yes,” be ready to help them discuss what it says and what they would do differently if this story were true.
- e. In the end, the Holy Spirit convicts hearts. He provides the wind for the sails. The power is from God. You are not in control, and **that** is why you can be confident that you will succeed if you don’t give up. Trust Him.



God is still unique. Close with a quote: “There is one thing the Lord will not share with us. God provides infinite grace to those who accept Him. God provides a world full of resources that reflect His hospitality. His glory, however, is off limits to us. Ask the couple in the garden who wanted to be like God (Gen. 3:5). Ask those who built the tower what profit came from wanting to ascend into the heavens (Gen. 11:4). Just as they had in the garden, we have a choice. We can have a name for ourselves, or make his name known. The two ambitions do not mix.

Perhaps this is why God has chosen the simple things of this world to confound the wise (Matt. 11:25).

Do you want to see healthy reproduction? There is a spiritual discipline not often mentioned in today’s popular writings. We have seen it lived out in the lives of some of the most fruitful men on the planet. The fact you have never heard their names is evidence of the grip this discipline has on their lives.

John 12:24 says, ‘I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’

Make it your discipline to die so the Lord of the Harvest can move forward through you.”ⁱⁱ

ⁱ C.S. Keener, **Miracles** (Baker, 2011), p. 557.

ⁱⁱ Nathan & Kari Shank, “Four Fields of Kingdom Growth,” p. 124-125, available free at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/588ada483a0411af1ab3e7ca/t/58a40ef11b631bcbd49c88c0/1487146760589/4-Fields-Nathan-Shank-2014.pdf> .