

# God's People Serve in God's Power (Leviticus 24:1-9)

To Read:

1. II Chronicles 13
2. I Corinthians 12:1-11
- I Peter 4:7-11

## I. Introduction

### A. This morning we're continuing on in our study of Leviticus

- 2 1. If we go back to our outline for Leviticus, we remember that the first half of Leviticus dealt with judicial holiness
- 1 2. This section answered the question: how does Israel become holy?
- 1 3. And now we're entering the second section of Leviticus, dealing with practical holiness
- 1 4. This section is meant to answer the question: how should Israel be holy?
- 1 5. We started this section by seeing how Leviticus 17 connects judicial holiness to practical holiness - holiness lived in us is based on and is a reflection of holiness worked for us
- 1 6. Then, we looked at Leviticus 18-20 which focused on what Israel was to be like - instead of reflecting the nations around her, she should reflect the holiness and the glory of God
- 1 7. Then we looked at Leviticus 21-22 and we saw that the priests were called to an even higher standard of holiness because they served in the very presence of God and therefore represented Him
- 1 18. And last week we started a last section of Leviticus, which I'm calling 'The flavor of God's people' and we saw that the first characteristic of God's people is that they celebrate God's rule symbolized in the festival calendar

### 1 B. This morning we're going to look at a second flavor of God's people - God's people serve in God's power

1. Our passage this morning moves out of the festival calendar into daily life again and focuses on the daily and weekly rituals that were to be done in the Holy Place outside the veil by the priests
2. But, as we'll see in a few minutes, our passage this morning is closely tied to our passage from last week and the main point is going to come from the interaction between these two chapters
3. The service of oil and bread in the Tabernacle are intimately connected to the festival calendar and they depend completely on the festival calendar

### 1 C. Let's start this morning by reading Leviticus 24:1-9 together

### 1 D. Proposition: God called the Israelites to serve Him with what He had supplied which is how God's people will always relate to God.

- 1 1. What did this teach the ancient Israelites about God?
- 1 2. How should this point us to Christ?
- 1 3. How can this be applied to us?

## 1 II. What did this teach the ancient Israelites about God?

### 1 A. The bread and oil were the results of the harvest which had been given God

1. As I said a moment ago, the first part of Leviticus 24 is very closely related to Leviticus 23
2. So last week we looked at the festivals in Leviticus 23 and saw how they were arranged around the agricultural calendar with spring festivals and fall festivals that celebrated the harvest that God gave every year and the even greater acts of redemption that God had accomplished for His people
3. At the end of Leviticus 23, we've gone through a complete agricultural season, the harvest has been brought into the storehouses and God's bounty has been celebrated, so what now?
4. This is where Leviticus 24 fits in - God has provided, now what do we do with God's provision?
5. So it's not an accident that the objects of Leviticus 24 are the results of Leviticus 23 - harvest would have provided grain and grain and olives which the people could use to make bread and new oil
6. The bread and oil were the result of harvest - God had provided bountifully and now the people had bread and oil

### 1 B. The bread and oil were given in service of God

1. So God had given bountifully, the people had bread and oil, but what should they do with the bread and oil?
2. Leviticus 24 say, what God has given, use in service of God - God gave the oil, God gave the bread, now give it back to Him in worship
3. So, in Leviticus 23, the people are constantly called to rest, to observe a solemn sabbath, to afflict themselves and do no work, Leviticus 23 emphasized that the people could do nothing, the supply must come from God
4. But Leviticus 24 turns and says, once God has supplied, go and do - so the people are commanded to work
  - 1 a. Leviticus 24:2 - *Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly.*
    - b. The people were to rest as God provided for them, but once God provided they were to work to use God's provision - God had given olives, now go and beat out the oil
5. And this provision was to be used to serve God - so the oil and the bread came back to the temple
  - a. God's bounty wasn't to be used to serve their own passions, but to serve God - God had given so that they could serve Him - they could not serve Him on their own, but God had provided so that they could
    - 1 b. And we see that the oil and bread became continual symbols of serving God, so earlier we read II Chronicles 13:10-11 - *But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him. We have priests ministering to the LORD who are sons of Aaron, and Levites for their service. They offer to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt offerings and incense of sweet spices, set out the showbread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand that its lamps may burn every evening. For we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken him.*
    - c. Judah had continued in God's service while Israel quickly fell away and this was symbolized by the continual provision of oil and bread before God
6. So God had supplied and that supply was to be used to serve God

### 1 C. The oil gave light to light the way to God

1. Now I want to consider what the two acts of service were about - the first was daily oil for the lamps
2. And this was very practical - the Holy Place was the inside of a tent with very thick fabric on the outside - naturally it would have been very dark inside, especially at night - without lamps there would be no way for anyone to approach God and to serve in His presence
3. So the oil was given to fuel the lamps, something that must happen continually, and this is the listed purpose of the lamps over and over again - to give a light in the Holy Place
  - 1 a. So, in the earlier commands to build the lampstand, we see in Exodus 25:37 - *You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it.*
  - 1 b. And in our passage this morning it is also very clear, Leviticus 24:2 - *Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly.*
4. God had provided so that the way to God's place could be lighted - the way would be made plain and God's people could serve in His presence

### 1 D. The bread gave food with which to fellowship with God

1. The second act of service was to provide bread every week - twelve loaves, one loaf for each of the tribes of Israel representing enough for all of the people of God
  - 1 2. This bread was set out in the Holy Place, literally before the face of God, and the bread was intimately associated with God's presence, so it is called, in Exodus 25:30 - *And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.*
3. But God's presence wasn't there to be separate from the people, but so that the people could fellowship with God
  - 1 a. So we see in Leviticus 24:9 - *And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due.*
    - b. The priests were welcomed to come and eat - now remember there are 12 loaves for the 12 tribes and that the priests represent the people - so through this act of eating all the people celebrated fellowship with God and received provision in the presence of God
4. So God had provided so that God's people could seek Him in fellowship through their high priest

### 1 E. So kids, here's our kids' question for this morning:

1. Why did God provide for His people?
- 1 2. So that they could use it to serve Him.

### 1 III. How should this point us to Christ?

#### 1 A. Jesus served perfectly in God's power

1. At the center of the first part of Leviticus 24 is a call for God's people to serve Him in His power, with His supply
  - a. Unfortunately, much of the story of the Old Testament is the story of how God's people refused to look to God for supply and refused to serve God with His supply
  - 1 b. So we see Israel constantly looking to other providers, Isaiah 31:1-3 - *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD! And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.*
  - 1 c. And when God provides, so often Israel turns her back on God instead of serving Him, in fact, this was the warning and prediction of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-18 - *"Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ... Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*
  - d. God desired and demanded a people who would take what He so generously gave and use it to serve Him, but Israel failed, they received and they turned away and then they looked to other hands to provide
2. The Old Testament longs for someone to come who will truly serve in God's power, and this is where Jesus stands
  - a. Jesus was the One who perfectly served in God's supply and this is why so often the Gospels emphasize that Jesus was filled with God's Spirit
  - b. We need to remember that Jesus was truly a man - now I'm not saying anything about Him being God, He was truly God as well, but He was truly a man - Jesus was a man who relied on God's power in God's Spirit to perfectly serve God, and this is emphasized over and over again
  - 1 c. This is how Luke introduces Jesus, as the One working in the power of the Spirit, Luke 4:1, 14, 17-18 - *And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness... And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, ... And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*
  - 1 d. And this is John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus, John 1:32-34 - *And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*
  - 1 e. And John continues his testimony in John 3:34-35 - *For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.*
  - 1 f. And this is Jesus' testimony about Himself, John 5:19 - *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.*
3. Jesus was God's servant, He received from God in the power of the Spirit and He served God in God's power, though He was God Himself, yet He emptied Himself and became a servant and served by God's supply - He fulfilled what the bread and the oil were supposed to be, God's people receiving from God and returning in service to God

## 1 B. Jesus served to light the way to God

1. If Jesus fulfilled what the bread and oil were supposed to be, it should be no surprise that what the bread and oil represented were fulfilled in Jesus as well - and the oil represented light, a lit path into God's presence
12. And Simeon the prophet tells us that this is what Jesus came to do Luke 2:29-32 - *"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*
13. And Jesus Himself tells us emphatically, John 8:12 - *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
14. In fact, Jesus says that this is what He did in the power of the Spirit, He revealed God, He proclaimed good news, He opened blind eyes: He was the light, returning to Luke 4:18-19 - *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*
5. Jesus was God's servant, serving in God's power, and as God's servant, He served to be the light, lighting the way to God, enabling God's people to approach and to serve in the presence of God

## 1 C. Jesus is greater than the Bread of the Presence

1. The bread was the bread that was set before the presence of God and became an opportunity to receive sustenance from and celebrate fellowship with God
2. And Jesus claims that He has become this for us
- 1 3. First, Jesus claims that He is greater than the Bread of the Presence, an astounding and blasphemous claim from anyone who was less than God Himself, Matthew 12:1-6 - *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here."*
- 1 4. But Jesus doesn't just set aside the Bread of the Presence, He said He came to give a better bread, John 6:35, 48-51 - *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ... I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*
- 1 5. And on the night before His death, Jesus proclaimed that it was soon to be accomplished, He would become a better bread, a better nourishment and a better fellowship between God and His people, Matthew 26:26 - *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."*
- 1 2 6. And Jesus did this serving in God's power, so Hebrews 10:5-7 says - *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"*
7. Jesus was God's servant, serving in God's power, and as God's servant He set a better bread at a better table and welcomes God's people to come and receive and share fellowship with God Most High

## 1 IV. How can we apply this to ourselves?

### 1 A. We need to serve God in God's power

1. The juxtaposition of Leviticus 23 and Leviticus 24 call us to consider that once God has provided we are to return God's provision in service to Him and this is still true for us today
12. So Peter says that all of our service must be done in God's power, I Peter 4:10-11 - *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies---in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
13. And Paul emphasizes that though there are different gifts, different ways to serve, the character of Christian service is not what specific service it is but that the service is empowered by God, I Corinthians 12:4-6 - *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.*
14. And, in another place, Paul emphasizes that we have been created for service, God has given to us so that we can give back to Him, Ephesians 2:10 - *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
5. The Christian life is a life that aims to use everything that God has provided, not in service of self, not in self-pleasure, self-fulfillment, but in service of God - we have received - and what do we have that we did not receive - and now we return; you have given and I will serve
6. So as we consider the bread and the oil, we ask , "Have I taken what God has given me and used it to serve Him? Or am I using what God has given in service of myself? Am I seeking God's will or my pleasure in God's bounty?"
7. And again, we ought to consider the bread and the oil and ask ourselves, "When I am 'serving' God, am I relying on myself - my wisdom, my intelligence, my strength, my ingenuity - or am I seeking God's power to serve?"

### 1 B. One way we serve God is by serving as His witnesses in this world

1. Jesus was God's perfect servant and He was the perfect and complete light of the world
2. But as we are found in Christ and follow Him in redeemed and empowered service, we also are called to be light in this world - to continue the revelation of God as servants of Christ
13. In fact, Jesus said something about this, Matthew 5:14-16 - *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*
4. Now, we need to be clear - Jesus is speaking to the Jews, God's people, and condemning them for failing to be the light of the world, but inasmuch as in Christ we are now God's people, we ought to hear that and say, "yes, we ought to be lights in this world"
5. Our service to God should be marked by an effort to reveal who God is in this world through our words and through our deeds; our service to God should be marked by revealing the light of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world desperately in need of light
6. So there are many ways to serve, but all of our service should revolve around this - how am I serving to reveal God's light in this world? How am I testifying to Christ and His gospel?

### 1 C. We testify that we need God's power when we sit down to table with Him

1. As the Bread of the Presence was set before God and weekly the priests came to eat of it, it was one more reminder that they relied completely on God - the bread had come from God twice over
2. And like God's people of old, as we are called to be God's servants and witnesses we need to continually remind ourselves that we can only serve in God's power, and just like the priests of old, we are called to do that at a table, a table at which we receive bread that God supplied from God's hand, a table we will celebrate at in a few minutes
3. At this table we testify that nothing comes from us, everything must come from Him - we are called to serve, but if we are to serve, we need to be fed; we are called to witness, but if we are to witness, we must be washed
14. So we come to this table hearing and savoring Jesus' words in John 6:53-55 - *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. - Yes, Jesus, we want that, we need that, without you we are nothing, we are dead*
15. And we come to this table affirming and desiring Jesus' words in John 15:5 - *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. - Yes, Jesus, apart from you, we can do nothing, so come feed us, come fill us, come create us so that we can go do good works which you prepared in advance for us to do*