

# Bread, Light, Evil Speech and Vengeance (Leviticus 24)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Leviticus

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## I. Review and Introduction to This Lesson

- a. **Leviticus 21-22** addressed the requirements for *priests and sacrifices*.
  - i. This is important for us, since:
    1. in the New Testament describes Christians as members of the new priesthood (**Romans, Hebrews, 1 Peter, Philippians and Revelation**).
    2. We are offering up the “living sacrifices” of our own bodies, as Paul explains in **Romans 12:1**.
- b. **Leviticus 23** covered the special holy days in the annual calendar.
  - i. As Paul explained in **Colossians 2**, the sabbaths and feasts of the Levitical law have been done away with, but were important foreshadowings of the realities we now have in Christ.
    1. From the Sabbaths – Let us be diligent to enter the rest that will come at the end.
    2. From the Passover – Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed, and we are saved from death by His blood.
    3. From Feast of the Unleavened Bread – We must get the sin out of our own lives and out of the church.
    4. From Feast of the Harvest (Pentecost) – Let us see and work for the great spiritual harvest of souls.
    5. From the Feast of Trumpets – Let us be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus and the Day of Judgment which will be announced suddenly, with the sound of a trumpet.
    6. From the Day of Atonement – This foreshadowed how Jesus, our High Priest, entered heaven itself to make atonement with His own blood and to open the way of access to God *for us*.
    7. From the Feast of Tabernacles – Our bodies will be replaced when all the dead are raised. Let us be careful what we do with our bodies, and may we all be prepared for that Day!

- ii. As we think back to things we covered recently and now approach the last chapters of Leviticus, let us remember the words of Paul and look to the lessons we can learn here as well.
  - 1. “For *whatever things were written before were written for our learning*, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (**Romans 15:4**, NKJV)

## II. Burning Lamps and Showbread

- a. Instructions regarding the olive oil for the lampstand in the Holy Place.
  - i. Read **Leviticus 24:1-4**.
  - ii. Recall from **Hebrews** that only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place (and only once per year).
  - iii. The other priests ministered in the Holy Place, where there were:
    - 1. The oil-fueled pure gold lampstand with seven lights (one on each branch);
    - 2. The table of showbread;
    - 3. The golden altar of incense; and
    - 4. The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, with cherubim (angels) woven into the fabric.
  - iv. We discussed the lampstand (**Exodus 25**), the curtain (**Exodus 26**), and oil (**Exodus 30**) in our prior series on **Exodus**.
    - 1. As discussed previously, some early Christian writers saw in the lampstand a foreshadowing of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
      - a. Note the oil and the number seven, both of which have been associated with the Holy Spirit.
      - b. **Isaiah 11:1-3** (in the LXX) discusses seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit.
      - c. Consider also the reference to the “seven Spirits of God” (or possibly seven-fold Spirit of God) in **Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5**, and especially **5:5**.
      - d. The Spirit is also associated with light, as in the case of the pillar of cloud and fire that led the Israelites out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the Wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. That pillar

foreshadowed the Holy Spirit, as Paul alludes to in **1 Corinthians 10:1-2**.

- v. Early Christian writer Methodius (apparently bishop of the church in Lycia, in Asia Minor, d. 312 AD), in *The Banquet of the 10 Virgins*, tied the temple lampstand oil in **Leviticus 24** with the Parable of the 10 Virgins, in **Matthew 25**.
  - 1. “Now they offered, in **Leviticus**, oil of this kind, ‘pure oil olive, beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually, without the veil ...before the Lord.’ But they were commanded to have a feeble light from the evening to the morning. For their light seemed to resemble the prophetic word, which gives encouragement to temperance, being nourished by the acts and the faith of the people.
  - 2. “But the temple (in which the light was kept burning) refers to ‘the lot of their inheritance,’ inasmuch as a light can shine in only one house. Therefore it was necessary that it should be lighted before day. For he says, ‘they shall burn it until the morning,’ (**Leviticus 24:3**) that is, until the coming of Christ. But the Sun of chastity and of righteousness having arisen, there is no need of other light.
  - 3. “So long, then, as this people treasured up nourishment for the light, supplying oil by their works, the light of continence was not extinguished among them, but was ever shining and giving light in the ‘lot of their inheritance.’ But when the oil failed, by their turning away from the faith to incontinence, the light was entirely extinguished, so that the virgins have again to kindle their lamps by light transmitted from one to another, bringing the light of incorruption to the world from above. Let us then supply now the *oil of good works* abundantly, and of prudence, being purged from all corruption which would weigh us down; lest, while the Bridegroom tarries, our lamps may also in like manner be extinguished.”
    - a. (Source: Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, discourse 6, chapter 4; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 6, p. 330)
    - b. The points made here by Methodius can be summarized in the following ‘three lights’:
      - i. The first (limited light): lamps of the tabernacle burned only until the sun rose (as the word of

God, delivered by the prophets, provided some light until the coming of Christ).

1. Apparently, there must have been some kind of opening from the Holy Place of the tabernacle to the exterior, through which the natural light of the sun could enter.
  2. Therefore, it was only necessary to light the lampstand in the evening and to maintain it until the sun rose the next morning.
- ii. The second light: the bright light of the sun, representing the coming of Christ.
  - iii. The third light: until Christ returns, we must be providing light to the world, through our works (obedience to Christ, taking care of others). We must have the '*oil of good works*' found in us when Christ returns.
- c. I believe this theme can be seen in the Scriptures as well.
- i. The First Light: The Old Testament Scriptures and the words of the prophets as a light that God gave the people before the coming (or return) of Christ.
    1. "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path." (**Psalm 119:105**, NKJV)
    2. "For their enemies deserved to be deprived of light and imprisoned in darkness, those who imprisoned your children, through *whom the incorruptible light of the law* was to be given to the world." (**Wisdom of Solomon 18:4**, LXX, OSB)
    3. "And so we have *the prophetic word confirmed*, which you do well to heed as *a light that shines in a dark place*, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came

by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:19–21, NKJV)

4. Jesus said regarding John the Baptist: “He was the *burning and shining lamp*, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.” (John 5:35, NKJV)
- ii. The Second Light: Christ as the sun, as the great light appearing at the dawn.
  1. “But to you who fear My name *the sun of righteousness shall arise* with healing in His wings...” (Malachi 3:20, LXX, OSB; corresponding to Malachi 4:2 in most other Bibles)
    - a. This statement reminds me of something written by Tertullian. He informed the pagans that the ancient Christian custom of gathering on “Sun-day” and praying facing to the east (from which the sun rises) was *NOT* based on worshiping the sun!
    - b. “Others, again, certainly with more information and greater verisimilitude, believe that the sun is our god.
    - c. “...The idea no doubt has originated from our being known to turn to the east in prayer. But you, many of you, also under pretense sometimes of worshipping the heavenly bodies, move your lips in the direction of the sunrise. In the same way, if we devote Sun-day to rejoicing, from a far different reason than Sun-worship...”
    - d. (Source: Tertullian, *The Apology*, chapter 16; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 31)

2. "In Him was life, and the life was *the light of men*. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. *That was the true Light which gives light to every man* coming into the world." (**John 1:4–9**, NKJV)
3. "And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen *a great light*, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death *Light has dawned*.'" (**Matthew 4:13–16**, NKJV; quoting from **Isaiah 9:1-2**)
4. "And this is the condemnation, that the *light has come into the world*, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (**John 3:19–21**, NKJV)
5. "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, '*I am the light of the world*. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'" (**John 8:12**, NKJV)
6. After healing a man born blind, Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming

when no one can work. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"  
(John 9:4–5, NKJV)

- iii. The Third Light: We (Christians) must have the oil and must be the light of this world, until He returns.
  - 1. “*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*” (Matthew 5:14–16, NKJV)
    - a. Note the connection here between being the light and demonstrating good works. This reminds me of something similar in the quote from Methodius.
    - b. Although “good works” can be looked down on in some Protestant circles, note what Jesus says here.
  - 2. In the Parable of the Shrewd Manager, Jesus referred to His followers as “sons of the light”.
    - a. “So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than *the sons of light*.” (Luke 16:8, NKJV)
    - b. Jesus refers to his followers as “sons of the light”.
  - 3. Read the Parable of the 10 Virgins and its prelude from **Matthew 24:45-25:13**.
    - a. The *bridegroom* in this parable represents Jesus.

- b. The *ten virgins* represent Christians, those who believe in Jesus.
  - c. **Questions:** What is the oil? What is the *difference* between the wise five virgins and the five foolish ones?
    - i. Methodius said the oil is good works, which come from obeying the teachings of Jesus.
    - ii. In context (**Matthew 24:40-51**), the wise virgins are the ones who are found faithfully doing what they were told to do, when the Master returns. They fed and took care of their fellow servants.
    - iii. This is similar to what Jesus teaches in the story of the Sheep and Goats in **Matthew 25**, and also in the Sermon on the Mount about being the “light of the world” and “seeing your good works”.
- 4. “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, *among whom you shine as lights in the world*, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” (**Philippians 2:14–16**, NKJV)
- b. Instructions regarding the showbread that is set out in the Holy Place.
  - i. Read **Leviticus 24:5-9**.



1. Bread loaves are to be placed before the Lord.
  2. This bread is to be replaced once per week (on every Sabbath).
  3. After it is removed, the priests (only) would eat this bread.
- ii. **Question:** What does this make you think of? (Holy bread taken once per week, which only the priests were allowed to eat.)
1. Of course, the first thing I think of is the Lord's Supper, which Christians (members of the new priesthood) take each week.
  2. Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (**John 6:51**, NKJV)
- iii. We went into more detail on how the ministry of the priests in the Holy Place foreshadows our own ministry as members of God's new priesthood, in our expository series on **Exodus**, in the lesson: *Shadow of the Church (Exodus 25:23-40)*.
- a. In the three elements of the tabernacle ministry of the priests in the sanctuary, we see foreshadowed *our own ministry as the priests of God*. This includes:
1. To offer sacrifices – of denying the flesh, helping others, praising God;
  2. To live under the light of the Spirit and be the light to a dark and lost world;
  3. To partake in the bread of life each week and to meet the needs of others; and
  4. To be always devoted to prayer (like priests offering incense day and night).

### III. Cursing God

- a. Read **Leviticus 24:10-16**.
- b. The man cursed God and is brought before Moses for judgment.
  - i. Perhaps saying something evil about God out of anger, or calling a curse down upon his enemy in a way that abused the name of God.
  - ii. One way or another, he was disrespectfully using the name of God.

- iii. He is sentenced to death by stoning, with the congregation to enact the punishment.
- c. Some of us come from families where cursing was common when people were angry.
  - i. Those of us from that type of background may be tempted to revert to that when they become extremely upset.
  - ii. Others are often in places (like work, or listening to the news or a podcast) where others are frequently cursing or misusing the name of Jesus or the Father. Paul warned us to beware of those influences!
    - 1. “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” (1 **Corinthians 15:33**, NKJV)
- d. I have heard some people minimize sins based on what comes out of their mouths (swearing, taking the Lord’s name in vain, slander, etc.) by saying, “It is *only* words!”.
  - i. They seem to believe that sins of the tongue are trivial compared to sinful actions we take with our own bodies (such as striking another person).
  - ii. However, in **Leviticus 24** we see that a person who cursed God is put to death, while someone who strikes another person (and knocks out his eye or a tooth) faces a *much less severe* consequence.
- e. Early Christian writer Cyprian, bishop of the church in Carthage, North Africa, used this passage from **Leviticus 24** to address sins of speech with Christians.
  - i. “That we must not curse.
  - ii. “In Exodus: ‘You shalt not curse nor speak ill of the ruler of your people.’ (**Exodus 22:28**) Also in the thirty-third Psalm [*LXX numbering*]: ‘Who is the man who desires life, and loves to see good days? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.’ (**Psalms 34:12-13**; also see **1 Peter 3:10-12**)
  - iii. “Of this same thing in Leviticus: ‘And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring forth him who has cursed abroad outside the camp; and all who heard him shall place their hands upon his head, and all the assembly of the children of Israel shall stone him.’ (**Leviticus 24:13-14**) Of this same thing in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians: ‘Let no evil discourse proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the edification of faith, that it may give grace to the hearers.’ (**Ephesians 4:29**)

- iv. Of this same thing to the Romans: 'Blessing, and not cursing.' [**Romans 12:14**, regarding those who persecute us] Of this same thing in the Gospel according to Matthew: 'He who shall say to his brother, You fool! shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire.' (**Matthew 5:22**) Of this same matter, according to the same Matthew: 'But I say to you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.' (**Matthew 12:36-37**)
- v. "[*Subtitle of section*] 14. That we must never murmur, but bless God concerning all things that happen.
- vi. "In Job: '[*Job's wife says to him...*]' Say some word against the Lord, and die. But he, looking upon her, said, "You speak as a foolish woman. If we have received good things from the Lord's hand, why shall we not endure evil things?" In all these things which happened unto him, Job did not sin with his lips in the sight of the Lord.' (**Job 2:9-10**) Also in the same place: 'Have you regarded my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth: a man without complaint: a true worshipper of God, restraining himself from all evil.' (**Job 1:8**)
- vii. "Of the same thing in the thirty-third Psalm [*LXX numbering*]: 'I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall ever be in my mouth.' (**Psalms 34:1**) Of this same thing in Numbers: 'Let their murmuring cease from me, and they shall not die.' (**Numbers 17:10**) Of this same thing in the Acts of the Apostles: 'But about the middle of the night Paul and Silas prayed and gave thanks to God, and the prisoners heard them.' (**Acts 16:25**)
- viii. "Also in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians: 'But doing all things for love, without murmurings and revilings, that you may be without complaint, and spotless sons of God.'" (**Philippians 2:14-15**)
  - 1. (Source: Cyprian, *Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise No. 12*, book 3; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 537)
- ix. **Challenge:** Take inventory of your own life, specifically regarding *what comes out of your mouth*!
  - 1. Keep a *tight rein* on your tongue.
  - 2. "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is *useless*." (**James 1:26**, NKJV)
  - 3. See sins of the tongue as seriously as Jesus and the apostles did, and repent!

#### IV. Eye for Eye

a. Read **Leviticus 24:17-23**.

i. The old Law called for taking *vengeance* when one is sinned against.

1. However, it was restrained to match (but not exceed) the original offense.

ii. Moses recounted that on the “day of the assembly” (when Israel was gathered at Mt. Sinai and the 10 Commandments were first spoken), the Lord had told him that another prophet “like him” would come in the future. (**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**)

1. All Israel must listen to that future prophet, or they would face dire consequences.

2. Eusebius made the point that in order to be “like Moses”, this future prophet must be one who would bring new laws; since that was the distinctive attribute of Moses. All the prophets who came after Moses just said, “Follow the laws given by Moses.” None of them (until Jesus) brought new laws. Writing c. 320 AD, in an apologetic work entitled ‘*Proof of the Gospel*’, Eusebius stated:

a. “Thus the Savior on the one side is our teacher, and on the other the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, and of the prophets who followed him.

b. “For since as yet the prophecies lacked the fulfillment of their conclusions and of their words, He must necessarily fulfill them. As for example the prophecy in Moses says: ‘A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you like me. Him you shall hear in all things, whatsoever that prophet shall speak to you.’ (**Deuteronomy 18:15**)

c. “He fulfilled what remained to be fulfilled in this prophecy, appearing as the second Lawgiver after Moses, giving to men the Law of the Supreme God's true holiness. For Moses does not say simply ‘a prophet,’ but adds ‘like me’: ‘For a prophet,’ he says, ‘shall the Lord your God raise up to you, like me. Him shall ye hear’ (**Deuteronomy 18:15**), and this can only mean that He who was foretold would be equal to Moses.

d. “And Moses was the giver of the Law of holiness of the Supreme God. So He that was foretold, to be like Moses, would probably be like him in being a Lawgiver. And

though there were many prophets in later days, none of them is recorded to have been 'like Moses.'"

- i. (Source: Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, book 1, chapter 7)
- iii. Also, as it explains in **Hebrews 8:8-13**, the Lord had revealed through Jeremiah that in the future, there would be a *new covenant*, with *new laws*. (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**, designated **Jeremiah 38:31-34** in the LXX)
- iv. Read **Matthew 5:38-42**.
  1. Jesus brought in new laws. He changed what had been handed down by Moses. The only one with the authority to change the things handed down by Moses would be "the Prophet" promised in **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**. That prophecy was *fulfilled by Jesus*, as explained by Peter (**Acts 3:22**) and by Stephen (**Acts 7:37**).
  2. Early Christians understood the implications of this new teaching of Jesus that they could no longer retaliate. They must *love their enemies* and do good to them.
    - a. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'" (**Romans 12:19-20**, NKJV)
  3. Several early Christian writers saw this new teaching of Jesus (changing the law of vengeance handed down by Moses) as fulfilling the prophecy of **Isaiah**:
    - a. "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (**Isaiah 2:4**, NKJV)
  4. For more on how the early Christians understood and applied this teaching on loving our enemies and not avenging ourselves when wronged, see audio lesson by David Bercot: '*What the Early Christians Believed about War*'. That message is available from Scroll Publishing or accessible via the Scroll Publishing YouTube channel. See also *The Legacy of Non-Resistance in the Churches of Christ*, <https://www.walking-by->

[faith.org/teaching/topical-lessons/lessons/the-legacy-of-non-resistance-in-the-churches-of-christ.](https://faith.org/teaching/topical-lessons/lessons/the-legacy-of-non-resistance-in-the-churches-of-christ)