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“Leviticus 26-27”

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With

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Leviticus 26-27

This episode covers Leviticus 26-27, bringing our study of Leviticus to a close. Our focus is primarily a question raised by Lev 26 — whether the offer of restoration to Yahweh (and thus to the land) described in Lev 26:40-42 is being fulfilled now or is yet to be fulfilled. The episode also addresses the reference to Sabbath cycles in Lev 26 and the “offering of people” to the sanctuary in Lev 27.

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 84, Leviticus 26-27. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

MSH: Very good, good to hear your voice again Trey and get back to Leviticus and say goodbye to Leviticus actually.

TS: It's kind of sad but this is it.

MSH: I've actually gotten a number of emails, people just appreciating going through Leviticus, and that's kind of what I wanted to hear at the end of the road because if you remember at the beginning I said if we can do Leviticus and make that interesting, we can do just about anything. So we'll hit two chapters today, the last two chapters, and I wanted to group these because the last chapter is, I don't want to say inconsequential. There is one item in there that I do want to spend a little bit of time on, but 26 is a pretty important chapter. And 27, I thought we could tackle at the same time because there is only one thing I really want to focus on there. So by way of overview, Leviticus 26 is sort of the epilogue to what scholars call the Holiness Code. If you remember way back in Leviticus 17, that's when the "Holiness Code" begins, at least the way scholars sort of look at Leviticus and break it up into sections. So this is the end of that. And then 27 is going to be some sort of like an appendage or appendix and we'll talk about that when we get there.

But Leviticus 26 is kind of like, if you're more familiar with Deuteronomy 28-30 where you have up until this point, you had a whole bunch of laws and then you hit sort of an end summary, which doesn't really summarize all the content but it's sort of there to reinforce the content of the laws that preceded. Hey, these things are important. Here is why they're important in summary fashion. And then make sure that you obey these because if you don't, bad things are going to happen, that kind of thing. So if you've read through Deuteronomy and you get those blessings and curses and then there's this sort of summary statement, that's kind of what Leviticus 26 is doing in the book. And Leviticus 26 sort of hammers his home in two ways. It accomplishes this summary reminder of why these things are important in two ways. Leviticus 26 will bring to the front the idea of free will, in other words, blessing or cursing with respect to obedience or disobedience with the Holiness Code. The content of the Holiness Code really depends on the choice of the people. God is not going to force obedience. It's really up to the people.

And so that concept, that idea comes forward really clearly and then the idea of reward and punishment is also unmistakable in Leviticus 26. So by way of a rough outline, the first 13 verses, you have promises of blessing, if you do these things in the Holiness Code then God will bring peace and prosperity to the land that you're in. He'll protect you from wild animals. You'll have lots of children. You'll have victory over your enemies. The land is specifically mentioned and I emphasize it here because we're going to focus on the land a good bit. The land will be abundantly productive and the covenant between you and God will remain intact. And so on the plus side, the promised blessing in the first 13 verses is that here we have a picture of God's rule over God's people in a harmonious relationship. It's not totally Eden because it's populated by people who are fallen, if we want to use that sort of post-fall terminology. It's not a perfectly Edenic environment but some of this imagery evokes the Edenic situation. It does sort of capture the re-inauguration or the kickstarting of an Edenic relationship, bringing that back. So

God saying look, when you get in the land, here is how I want you to behave and live. This is what will make you happiest.

It's what will make me happy. We'll have a harmonious covenantal relationship and all these wonderful things will extend and flow out from that. It reminds you of that Edenic situation and that's the point. We're reinstalling, re-inaugurating this rule of God on Earth. But then it transitions in verses 14-45. If you don't obey, there's just a litany of disasters and curses that will befall you and your people Israel in the land for violations. And there's kind of an escalating tone to it. It's like one set of awful things after the other leading to this crescendo of really terrible things. You're going to lose wars to your enemies. You're going to have diseases. Natural disasters will come. The land will not produce. You'll have famine. Wild animals will attack you and run all over the place. You'll get invaded by foreign armies. There'll be pestilence. You're going to be reduced to cannibalism at one point in Leviticus 26. And ultimately, you're going to be exiled and be threatened with extinction. So by the time you get to right around verse 34-35, you have this litany of disasters and then there's this sort of editorial comment that while you're gone, the land's Sabbaths will be restored.

There'll be recovery of the land Sabbath. And the language there anticipates, and I think the listeners can already tell if you've read through Leviticus 26 you can pick up on it pretty clearly, the language here anticipates what actually happened in the exile, which has a lot of scholars, and there'll be other things I'll point out in our episode today, that have led scholars to believe that this chapter, at least this chapter, maybe the Holiness Code more generally, was written in a post-Mosaic era tying the circumstances when it was written the conditions of the people, the conditions of the land back to the original covenant and basically making the point look, you're violating the covenant. This is the reason all these things are happening. You should've known that, that kind of lesson to give. But it just goes from good blessing then all this disaster stuff. But at the end of the chapter, the last five verses, there's this extension of Divine Mercy. Even if this awful stuff happens, even if you're terrible, if you're contrite, you repent, then God will remember his covenant. It actually says that specifically. God will remember his covenant and the land.

So there's this promise of restoration. Restoration is possible is the point. And then the chapter ends in the last verse with a postscript that actually says these are the statutes and rules and laws the Lord made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. And it sounds like that should be the end of the book but then you get chapter 27. Leviticus 27 feels like it was added later because of the nice neat way chapter 26 ends. So scholars are just wondering about when these two chapters are actually put together. And chapter 27 is really about financing the sanctuary, a really odd topic to end the actual book with if it was all written at once. It just feels added because chapter 26 is like we're done with all of these laws now. These are the laws that God gave you. If you obey them, it's life is wonderful. If you don't, get ready for disaster. Then we have this appendage about contributing silver to the sanctuary, here's what you need to do.

It just feels like an appendage. It's another reason scholars think we have an addition here because the previous chapter was a perfectly suitable editing so why throw this in? Well, we'll get to at least one thing in Leviticus 27. I want to spend most of time on chapter 26 and really two focus points. So the first of the two focus points that I want to concentrate on in this episode is the land, the loss of the land, and the open door to repentance, really the bulk of Leviticus 26. I'm going to read though the lion share of the chapter because on one level, it's

kind of self-explanatory, but on another level there's something that people really need to think about here, especially, and I'm going to use the E word for listeners, especially when it comes to eschatology. Believe it or not, we're going to talk about eschatology with respect to Leviticus. We did a little bit of that last time with the Jubilee's, previous episode. We're going to come back to that issue a bit. There's something else here that deals with eschatology that we really need to think about and then we'll tie it into that Jubilee discussion of the previous episode. Let's jump in here in verse 1 in Leviticus 26. We read,

“You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the LORD your God.² You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. **[MSH: Now it starts out fundamentally what you're going to read, oh Israelites, this is about your loyalties to Me or not. And it starts off with the most obvious ways to be disloyal, idolatry and neglecting the Sabbath]**

³“If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them,⁴ then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.⁵ Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.⁶ I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land.⁷ You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.⁸ Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.⁹ I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.¹⁰ You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new.¹¹ I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect. **[MSH: now that's the good news.]**

¹⁴“But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments,¹⁵ if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant,¹⁶ then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.¹⁷ I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.¹⁸ And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins,¹⁹ and I will break the

pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.²⁰ And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

²¹ “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins.²² And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.

²³ “And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me,²⁴ then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins.²⁵ And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.²⁶ When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

²⁷ “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me,²⁸ then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.²⁹ You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.³⁰ And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you.³¹ And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas.³² And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it.³³ And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. **[MSH: That is really grim. There’s just no other way to describe it. And then we have this comment.]**

³⁴ “Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths.³⁵ As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it.³⁶ And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues.³⁷ They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues. And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies.³⁸ And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.³⁹ And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity, and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.

MSH: Now that's the first 39 verses. It is grim. What I want you to notice is that throughout that as we read that, the language of blessing is tied to the land and the land to obedience. So the language of blessing, you're blessed when you're in the land. But being in the land, the fact of being in the land is tied to obedience. It is absolutely clear. Now, the covenant is also mentioned here and there's only one covenant that involved land and that was the Abrahamic covenant. So there are some, and we've talked about this before in prior episodes. There are some that doubt that the Abrahamic covenant, which included the land promise, when God comes to Abraham and I'll make you fruitful, multiply you as the stars in the sky.

I'm going to bring you to a specific land and all that stuff. There are some who really I think unthinkingly, I'm putting it that way because I'm not denying that the land promise might still be in effect although I will say you can make a very good case that it isn't, and we've talked about that before. This is where we're getting into this eschatological stuff now. But for those who doubt that the Abrahamic covenant had conditions, read Leviticus 26. It certainly did and frankly, it did before that. The Abrahamic covenant itself, earlier than Leviticus 26, is spoken of in these terms. You go back to Genesis 17:1,

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."

MSH: It echoes back to Genesis 12, the covenant. You look at Genesis 22. This is when Abraham is told to offer Isaac. You have the same thing going on here. It's very clearly conditioned. We know the story about Abraham offering Isaac and the angel of the Lord stops him, and here's what we read in Genesis 22:15. I'm going to read 15-18.

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

MSH: The Abrahamic covenant actually is both conditional and unconditional. The point is not that the covenant depended on human beings. It doesn't. God has purpose to raise up for himself a people, Deuteronomy 32 worldview, his allotment is Israel, Jacob. God had purposed to have a people on the earth who he will use to be a conduit, some mechanism by which he will restore the nations and reclaim them. We get that. That's the easy part. That's the transparent part. But people have looked at that and said well, the whole thing is unconditional. It isn't. Here in Genesis 22, he repeats the language of the covenant back in Genesis 12 and says hey, I'm going to do this now because you have obeyed. How much clearer could it be? So the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional in the sense that God will not be thwarted. God will raise up for himself a people and he will give them a land and he will bless them.

But the covenant is conditional in that if you're going to participate in it as a person, as an Israelite, as a son of Abraham, child of Abraham, if you're going to participate in it and enjoy its blessings, you cannot worship other gods. You must be loyal to the God of Israel. This is not a question of meriting the covenant by your own works. The issue is remaining loyal to Yahweh above all gods who has decided in the first place to make the covenant with you. You're not maintaining it. You're not deserving it. What you're doing is you're trying to show the God of gods, who decided I want you to be my people and I'm going to enter into a covenant relationship with you, I just want you to love me. I want you to be loyal to me. I want to be your God. If you don't want me as your God, if you take other gods, then I'm going to let you do that. You will not participate in this relationship if you don't want to be in it. This is the notion. So there's this unconditional purpose, God will get his way in the end. He will have a people. He will never let the whole Edenic plan die.

He will never let it go away completely. I've talked about this a lot in the Unseen Realm but if you want to be part of that, you must believe. You must align yourself with the true God. You have to want the relationship and the way you show that you want it is you don't go off and worship other gods. You behave the way God wants you to do. When you mess up, you're contrite. God will forgive you. What's Leviticus about? You have situations where if you sin high handedly and you essentially thumb your nose at the God of gods, and you don't want to be loyal to him, well, there's really not going to be any atonement for that. But it's your choice. There's the free will element. It's your choice. If you just make a mistake and you become impure and you become a threat to sacred space, you become a threat to people around you in terms of the sanctity of the community, and when the sanctity of the community is threatened in Leviticus, the whole system is threatened because God is not going to tolerate impurity in his presence.

You got to get that taken care of. We'll go through how to do that. That's essentially where Leviticus is at. And we have these mechanisms, like the Day of Atonement, like the Jubilee system for a reset. God has built these things into it to restore the conditions of the relationship back to these utopian Edenic terms once a year, because you remember the Jubilee happened in conjunction with the Day of Atonement and all that. We covered that in the last episode. It's a reset so God is making provision for human frailties, human fallibility, but he wants loyalty. He wants contrition when it's appropriate. If you're just going to wantonly go after other gods. Think about it. This is why offenses against the person of God as against his status as the God of gods, crimes like idolatry and blasphemy, are death penalty offenses. It tells God I don't want to be in this relationship. God says fine, got it. Here's what happens now. This is why when you commit murder, willful murder, it's killing God in effigy. We learned that back in Genesis 9:6,

“Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

MSH: It's as though you're killing God in effigy or killing his imager. It's a high-handed deliberate slap in the face of God's original Edenic plan to have imagers, to have created intelligent beings that represent him on earth. When you start killing them, when you kill them off and they are God's imager, it's as though if you could, you would kill God. That's what's within you, that that kind of bitterness and hatred and malice and so on so forth. There's an underlying logic to a lot of these young sins, and murder is the most obvious because in

Numbers 35, it says, 'there is no ransom for this.' It's one of those big differences between the Old Testament system and New Testament system.

We don't have that kind of thing in the New Testament. All sin is covered by the blood of Christ. But here we're in a different setting. But you can see I think the rationale being about loyalty to God. This is what salvation means really in both Testaments. Who do you align yourself with? It's up to you, and you make your choice and you have to suffer and deal with the consequences. Now let's go back to Leviticus 26. The disloyalty that's described in the chapter is in really clear stark terms. They're exilic terms. Verse 17, 'I will set my face against you. Those who hate you will rule over you.' Verse 23,

²³ "And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, ²⁴ then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁵ And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

MSH: In verse 29 we get the cannibalism. We get laying the city's waste. We get the enemies over-running the cities. Verse 33, 'I will scatter you among the nations.' This is the picture of the exile. The exile happened. In Old Testament history, we know this. Any Bible student knows this and that means that Israel forfeited the right, if you want to say it that way, really forfeited the ability, forfeited to the status of one who belongs in the land. It's gone. They did the things that God said not to do and they got the results that God outlined would happen.

Now the key issue here isn't really the exilic description. That's clear. The key issue's whether the offer of restoration, and here's where we drift back into eschatology, because the offer of restoration as we just read the first 39 verses is going to follow all that bad stuff. So after God says you're going to be expelled, you're going to be vomited out from the land, here's what we read in Leviticus 26,

⁴⁰ "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

MSH: So it's a very clear offer of restoration. Now, two questions. Number one, does that promise, does that offer of restoration and with it the regaining of the land, remembering the land promise, does that point to the repentance of all peoples who respond to the Gospel, in other words, does it refer to the church, circumcision neutral thing we call the church, does it point to the repentance of all peoples who respond the Gospel, the church, so that the land promises are transformed to encompass the whole world or does it point more narrowly to a national repentance of modern Jews, because we're still looking for that, a national repentance

of modern Jews to embrace the Messiah in which case the land is only Israel and that land will be fully regained in a messianic sense?

Which one is it? I think you can tell very obviously how this drifts into eschatology. There's one, and it's the dominant popular prophecy school, the John Hagees and whatnot, that this is all about national repentance. This is just for the Jews. This is about a national revival in Israel and Israel becoming a nation and all this kind of stuff. And when those Jews are contrite and they embrace their Messiah, that's what Leviticus 26 as foreshadowing, not the general embracing of the Gospel, the message of their Messiah the first time around. So that's one issue. Second issue is will the description of right relationship with Yahweh and his people in the land way back in Leviticus 26:11-13, let me read it for you. Catch the description here.

¹¹ I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.

¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

MSH: Does that whole set of circumstances describe the return of the Messiah in the future to the land of Israel following a modern conversion of Jews, a modern reconsideration of Jews to embrace Jesus as the Messiah or should it be exclusively understood in the context of Jesus, what he did on the cross, and then Jesus as the Spirit, remember the Lord is the Spirit, we read that four or five times in the book of Acts, does it refer to the context of Jesus as the Spirit dwelling in and among and with believers not just in Israel but all over the world? Which one is it? It's very clear the eschatological drift. What I want you to get out of this is that you can read Leviticus 26 both ways.

This is something I alluded to in my blog series of a couple years ago, why an obsession with this eschatology is a waste of time. This is not easy stuff to answer. Does this offer of restoration refer to a modern conversion of Jews in Israel following some migration back into Israel, that they're now open to the Messiah at the second coming or just prior to it or in conjunction with it. Is that what this restoration in Leviticus 26 is talking about or is it something bigger? Does it refer to Jews and Gentiles embracing the Messiah the first time around, embracing the Gospel and Israel is no longer, the land of God and his people is no longer just that little plot on the earth called Israel but it's the whole world? Is it narrow or is it expanded? It's hard to answer because of the way the New Testament talks about Israel. Just think about some of the stuff that Paul says. Here's why it's complicated. If you go to Romans Chapter 2:28, Paul says,

²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

MSH: Well that complicates things because without that, we might think of Jews as those who are ethnically Jewish and living in this land and then we sort of parse Leviticus 26 accordingly. It just isn't that simple. Paul does refer to the church as the Israel. Paul does say in Galatians 3 that those who are the seed of Abraham are not necessarily those who are physically the seed of

Abraham. If you are Christ's, Jew or Gentile, you are Abraham's seed and heir according to the promise. You have all sorts of complicating factors. So this is why if anyone comes to you and says I have prophecy all figured out, ignore them. They deserve to be ignored because these are really difficult questions. Let me complicate it even more.

The second issue that I raised was, the first one was the promise of restoration, was it narrow referring to ethnic Israelites and Jews, modern conversion of Jews, that's the offer of restoration, that's the restoration we should look for. Not the whole world and the church, believers embracing the Messiah. The first time around we should be looking for is Jews embracing the Messiah the second time around. There was a second issue and here it is. I'll repeat it again. Will the description of the right relationship between Yahweh and his people, about Yahweh saying I will make my dwelling among you. My soul won't deplore you. I will walk among you and be your God.

Is that set of circumstances refer to the return of Jesus, the second coming, in Israel to Jews who had now embrace him or does it refer to anyone, ethnic Jew or Gentile and any believer, they're all the children of Abraham, does it refer to any believer embracing the Messiah the first time around so that the Spirit dwells in and among and with them? Does it refer to Israel as a nation or the church? Now here is where we confuse it even more. If you go to 2 Corinthians 6:16, guess what? Paul quotes that passage in Leviticus. He quotes Leviticus 26:12, the part about I will walk among you and will be your God and you'll be my people. Here's what Paul says. He's writing to the Corinthians, a bunch of Gentiles. He says in verse 16,

⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

MSH: Do you see what Paul just did there? Paul takes a quotation, a line from Leviticus 26 about Israelites in the land or not, in this case, in the land enjoying the benefits of it and he applies it to the Corinthians, to the church, to the Gentiles who believe in the Messiah. He's saying look you Corinthians, you wacky Corinthians, you got to stay away from idols. Why Paul? Paul says well, what agreement is the temple of God have with idols? We, you are the temple of God, just like God said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them and I shall be their God and they shall be my people. Gods live in temples and God lives in a temple. You happen to be the temple and he wants to walk among you, dwell among you and I'm going to quote Leviticus 26 to prove it.

These issues of fulfillment, oh, the prophecy was given to the Jews and so it's only for the Jews. Yeah until Paul changes it, until the New Testament does something different with it. So it is just not that simple, and I'll call them simplistic, even though they're enormously complicated and have lots of colorful charts with them, these simplistic prophecy systems. You got to gravitate away from them and you got to ask yourself what could the text sustain? How many different ways can this work? And you can build a case for either view. Don't assume that the Christian who takes the view you don't like is just hopelessly wrong and my position is the biblical one. Well, actually you can make a good biblical case for a couple of scenarios and

frankly, my eschatology is we're not going to know how anything works until hindsight because that's the way it happened the first time around.

And that was deliberate because of the powers of darkness, the rulers, and all that stuff I talk about the Unseen Realm. They weren't supposed to know the plan and they didn't. Now, let's go back. We're still in Leviticus 26. Here's something even more that will probably startle some of you in the audience. Here's the second focus. That was all the first focus in Leviticus 26. Here's the second one, and this concern's Leviticus 26:40-45. This is the comment about the Sabbaths. Remember last episode we talked about the Jubilee and the Sabbath cycles and how that might work out chronologically in relationship to a Messiah. I had Trey post an article from Ben Zion Wacholder about chronomessialogy or something, because it comes from Leviticus 26, this thing about counting Sabbath cycles to figure out, to connect that to Daniel 9, when's the Messiah going to come here? Let's go back to Leviticus 26:40-45 and look at what it says.

⁴⁰ “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵ But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”

MSH: Here's the issue. If you remember the last episode with the Jubilee cycles or if you read Wacholder's article, you know that one, not the only, one of the ways of counting the cycle of Sabbath, the number of the 70s, one of the ways of counting the Sabbath cycles worked out so that, now catch the wording here, so that the Sabbath cycles ended with the arrival of Jesus. Now a lot of eschatological systems don't like that system because they want to hold onto the last seven year cycle and project that out into the future. Those of you who are sort of into eschatology, you know that the Sabbath cycles in Daniel 9 can get interpreted that way as well. What you see here is that there actually is more than one way to look at this and one of the ways is that the Sabbath cycles bring us to Jesus.

You say, that's nice, big deal. Well, do you realize, remember when John the Baptist shows up, the voice crying in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord? Remember that's how he's described by the Gospel writers make straight in the desert a highway for our God. You know where that language comes from, that description of John, I spent a whole chapter on this in the Unseen Realm by the way. Do you know where that language comes from? It comes from Isaiah 40. It's a quotation of Isaiah 40. So John the Baptist becomes the voice crying in the

wilderness described in Isaiah 40:3. Well listen to the first two verses of Isaiah 40 prior to the voice showing up and crying in the wilderness. And the way the New Testament interprets that is that's John. He's preparing the way for Jesus so we're talking about the first coming here. Here are the first two verses of Isaiah 40.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her [**MSH: If you've read Unseen Realm, you know all those imperatives are plural. God is speaking to his Divine Council. it's a council meeting because God is acting again.**]

that her warfare is ended,

that her iniquity is pardoned,

that she has received from the LORD's hand

double for all her sins.

MSH: Now if you read that without the New Testament, you might think that probably refers to the end of the exile and then they get to come home back in Judah under Zerubbabel, and we have Ezra and Nehemiah and all those guys and all that kind of stuff, the return from exile. The New Testament says no, the exile didn't really end until John the Baptist and Jesus showed up. That's when the exile really ended. That's why Jesus talked about the return of the kingdom of God because the exile was about to be over. And the exile was going to be in conjunction with, in this reconstruction, with the crucifixion. You say well isn't that guessing Mike? Well, listen to this. In Isaiah 40:2, the word iniquity, Hebrew *avon*, it's the same word as in Leviticus 26:43, 'they shall make amends for their iniquity.' And you say well, *avon* is such a common word. It's just general. He's not really drawing here in Leviticus 26. Well, in Isaiah 40:2, it says her iniquity, *avon*, is pardoned.

The word for pardoned there is the Hebrew lemma *ratza*. Guess where that comes from? Same verse, Leviticus 26:43 except back in Leviticus it's translated make amends. Now it would be very easy, yes they're common lemmas. You could say well, this is kind of a coincidence, that this doesn't ruin my reconstruction of Daniel 9. I still think there's a future tribulation coming and I think Daniel 9 and Leviticus 26 refer to the second coming and a national movement toward accepting the Messiah and 1948 is a big deal and all that. Yes, you can make that argument. What I'm trying to get you see is you can make the other argument really well, too. You can say the exile ended when Jesus showed up because he offered salvation. And since all of the restoration passages in the Old Testament, Ezekiel 36-37, involve all the tribes, not just two that returned to the past. And it actually encompasses even the Gentiles because the Gentiles will come to Jerusalem to worship, too, that this is starting to look suspiciously like the offer of the gospel and the events of Pentecost, that this is fulfilled, that the Leviticus 26 vision here, the call for restoration, the offer of restoration is linked, even if you want to add up the Sabbath cycles a certain way, you can get them to the time of Jesus and say look, Daniel 9 was about the first coming, not the second one, and the offer of salvation is circumcision neutral.

It was to anyone who would believe. It was to the Jew first but also to the Greek, and this is why Paul does what he does with Leviticus 26. This is why other New Testament writers do what they do, to promises given exclusively originally to the Jews but they expand them to include the Gentiles. And when it talks about the Jews, all it's all the tribes. There's no focus on

just Judah and Benjamin, like the return from exile after the captivity and immediately. So how should we read this? And you know my answer to this is I don't know. I'm not omniscient. I'm just telling you this is why, add it to the list, a fixation on one system of eschatology and treating it like it's gospel truth, and that is a pun intended, is a mistake. It's just not that simple. And you should begin exploring. If you hold one, you should begin exploring the other. You need to think about what happens between the testaments, how these things might work out, and give yourself the advantage of being able to look at more than one picture, more than one scenario. And ask yourself, what would that mean? What does that mean for how I process biblical theology? What does that mean for how I think now?

What does that mean you for a theological worldview that I carry around in my head with me? It's just not the simple literalism. Plain sense makes the best sense, just throw that diddy out because sometimes the plain sense gets messed up or can be plain in two or three different ways. It's just not helpful. So before, we're transitioning to the end here, there's one thing I want to cover in Leviticus 27 and let's go to Leviticus 27 just to pick that up because sometimes I get asked questions about this or you'll see a kind of mistake in use of something here in Leviticus 27 by people who, I guess if I want to be mean I would say hate the Bible. If I want to be more charitable, I'd say have nothing better to do with their time than criticize it. But I'll read the first eight verses. I think you'll get the drift here.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, If anyone makes a special vow to the LORD involving the valuation of persons, ³ then the valuation of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴ If the person is a female, the valuation shall be thirty shekels. ⁵ If the person is from five years old up to twenty years old, the valuation shall be for a male twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁶ If the person is from a month old up to five years old, the valuation shall be for a male five shekels of silver, and for a female the valuation shall be three shekels of silver. ⁷ And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the valuation for a male shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁸ And if someone is too poor to pay the valuation, then he shall be made to stand before the priest, and the priest shall value him; the priest shall value him according to what the vower can afford.

MSH: Now recall Leviticus 27, the entirety of the chapter is about financing the sanctuary. And most scholars would say this isn't just the tabernacle. It probably does look to consider the temple as well, either prospectively or if Leviticus 26 and 27 was added later and it looks backward to the temple already exists, that sense. It's kind of irrelevant at least for the point I want to talk about Leviticus 27 for, and that is this whole concept of valuing persons. Now in the chapter, there's one section on if you want to contribute to the sanctuary, and silver is what the chapter asked for, you can contribute an amount of silver based upon who you are and who you are is going to have a different valuation.

After verse 8, it turns to animals. You might instead want to contribute silver based upon an animal that you have, that you want to use that as the basis for how much silver you're going to give or give the animal or something like that. And then it talks about gifts. It talks about

tithes. Basically, it's a system. It's a variety of ways to contribute to the sanctuary in silver and it's up to you to do whichever one you like. And you can do it more than once. You can vary the way you do this. Here is just sort of a list of suggestions as to how you might want to contribute to financing the sanctuary. That's all it is. But since we get this language of valuing persons, you get questions like is this human sacrifice, like if I don't have money then I have to give my body to the priest, and what are they going to do, use me as a substitute sacrifice? You actually read this kind of nonsense in Bible critic material.

It doesn't say that at all. The more, I'll use the word reasonable, even though it's misunderstood, the more reasonable objection is well, look at that. The Bible writers didn't count women as much as men. They have a low view of women. Well they also have a low view of age as well. I want to read you what Levine, his summery here. Before we get to Levine, here's what you have. Here's the breakdown. If you're 20-60 years old, the male value is 50 shekels, female is 30. If you're 5-20, it's 20 and 10, respectively. If you're one month to five years of age, it's 5 and 3. And if you're over 60, it's 15 versus 10. So there is a disparity by gender and also by age. I'm going to read Levine here.

“The custom of pledging one's valuation in silver to the sanctuary harkens back to the actual dedication of oneself or one's child to temple service In 1 Samuel 1 we read that Hannah vowed at the sanctuary of Shiloh that if God granted her a son, she would bring him to Shiloh where he would remain in service all his days. When Samuel was born to her, she did indeed devote him in this way. Pledging the equivalent of one's life according to a scale established by the priesthood served two ends. The spirit of the ancient tradition was satisfied and in practical terms the sanctuary received funds.”

MSH: It's obvious Levine believes that Leviticus 27 was written after the temple was built and after days of Samuel. He doesn't believe it's a mosaic. But I think it is worth pointing out that he connects this. You actually get an illustration of the practice or at least an analogy of devoting one's person to a holy spot, to a holy sanctuary in 1 Samuel 1. And his point is that he says the Leviticus system looks back on that. Someone else could say it's just an analogy because if you don't want to do that, if you want to devote your child's to service in the sanctuary, you could, if you want to contribute to the funding of the sanctuary, based upon the gender of your child, how old the child is, you can contribute a certain amount of money, amount of silver. And in that way, you support the work. So they would say it's just an analogy. Levine adds this thought.

“The silver content of the shekel is specified in verse 25. Every valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The silver content of the shekel is specified. Some features of the scale are readily explicable. The age factor reflects productive capacity. Elsewhere in Numbers 4:3 and 32, we find the age of service in the tabernacle to be between 20 and 50 years of age but the principle's the same. At the age of one month, the child was considered viable, in other words, likely to survive the perils of infant mortality. That is why according Numbers 18:15-16, firstborn sons are redeemed according to the same system of equivalents beginning at the

age of one month. Firstborn sons did not have to be pledged, of course. They already belong to God. Gender differentiation may be linked to productivity, it being presumed that a male could earn more than a female. The difference in valuations may also reflect a certain attitude toward women. It is worthy to note, though, that women could participate in the system freely. This fact is indicated by a number of other biblical references.”

MSH: So this isn't trading in women by men. This is purely voluntary. If a woman wanted to contribute in this way, she would ask what the scale was of the priest. Instead of entering into service in some physical way, she would get a valuation of silver and contribute that the work of the ministry if you want to say it that way, the work of the sanctuary. If she didn't want to do that, she doesn't have to. She could give some other form of gift, another form of tithe, something that would be based on an animal she has or an animal. This whole system is about now that we have priesthood, now that we have a tabernacle and now that we're settled in the land, either prospectively or actually, how do we keep this thing going because animals are going to die. They get old and they die. They get sacrificed.

The priest has to have sustenance because the priests were not landowners. They made their living based upon what was brought into the sanctuary, either in the terms of food or now that they get money, they can go out and buy food or by herds or whatever. The system has to be maintained, and so Leviticus 27 sets up a voluntary variety of ways to keep the priesthood, keep the sanctuary, running effectively as it has been laid out. This is not a human slave trade. It's not some sort of cryptic reference to human sacrifice. It's none of this stuff. It's just a system for making the system operate, the Levitical sanctuary and those who staffed it, helping to make their living. It was necessary and had to be done. It wasn't going to happen just by magic. So in summary, Leviticus 26 and 27, I think we can say a couple things here. I think Leviticus 26, especially, gives us a good lesson on grace because Israel did do all that stuff and they did suffer all those disasters and God did abhor them.

You will see that language used in the prophets, used of the exile. But God, nevertheless, said I can't abandon them forever. I want them to come back. To me it mirrors the whole Romans 5 thing, while we were yet sinners Christ died for them. This is just a feature of the character of God. Yes God judges sin. If God didn't judge sin then it is easy to sort of mock justice and mock righteousness. God does judge sin but he also loves people, specifically, he loves his people in this context. And I think it's just a good lesson about grace from, lo and behold, Leviticus 26. And secondly, I think there's a lot to think about here with respect to biblical theology, the clarity or non-clarity of things like prophecy, how complicated it really is. And I think we need to have some humility here. This is my position on eschatology. I get asked all the time, Mike, where are you at? Here's where I'm at.

We're not going to understand how all the prophecy yet to be fulfilled or if it's yet to be fulfilled or not, we're not going to understand all of that until after the fact. Why, because there are ambiguities built into the text and my view is that it was cryptic the first time and it's going to be cryptic the second time because that's the way God wants it. And we're not to be able to know how it worked, how it played out until after the fact. And we just need to be content with that and we need to not make competing attitudes toward it synonymous or analogous to the Gospel. That's just bad theology and frankly it's just kind of distasteful. It's unfortunate. There

are a lot of other words I could use for it but we need to avoid doing that sort of thing to fellow believers.