

*Balaam: Oracle #2 Part III: Holiness of God*

**SLIDE:**

“OH how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!”

Psalm 31:19

*Good morning. Notice how we all used the word “Good” when we say “Good morning.” We talk about Good News, Good Friday, the Goodness of God. As a child, the first prayer I ever learned was a simple table grace. “*God is great, God is good. Let us thank Him for the occasional Red Sox win.*”*

God IS GREAT and He IS GOOD. The single biblical word that summarizes these two ideas is the word ‘HOLY’.

Today, I’d like to look at the topic of God’s Holiness and our interaction with it every day. But first, I want to note some recent events.

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**SLIDE: JEWS ARE ABANDONNING FRANCE**

You undoubtedly have seen the news about the killing of 12 people last month at the Paris offices of a satirical magazine that dared to publish cartoons of Mohammad. On the same day in Paris, another gunman – in an attack that was coordinated with the first one – seized a grocery store and eventually killed four hostages before himself being killed by police.

Now, the motive for the attack against the magazine was to avenge slander. What was the motive for seizing a grocery store? Well, the US media reports added a little more detail but didn't tell the whole story – they describe the grocery store as a “Kosher deli”.

- “*Kosher deli*” is code for ‘*Jewish grocery*’. The terrorist attacked a Jewish store and murdered four Jews just because they were Jews.
- As normally happens, former President Carter and others blamed the attack on Israel’s policies in Gaza.
- Blaming the State of Israel for anti-Semitism misses the point. Anti-Semitism thrived for almost 2000 years when the State of Israel did not even exist.

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- The massacres in Russia — and the periodic ones in the Middle East — took place when the State of Israel did not exist.
- **The Holocaust which consumed 6 million Jews didn't happen because Hitler was pro-Palestinian.**

It happened because they were Jews.

Why the hatred of Jews? The Book of Revelation says that the Dragon pursued the woman in order to devour the Child. Satan will always persecute the Jews because it was from the Jews than the Messiah (Jesus) would and did come.

We can get discouraged about tragic events like these – it's like we're living in a Tolkien story where evil is on the march and we're powerless to stop it. The events are tragic, and yet Romans 8:28 tells us that: "... we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."

- **THIS DOESN'T SAY THAT ALL THINGS ARE GOOD. It says that God makes all things, good or bad, to work together for our good.**

Something is going on that is generally unnoticed. According to a British journalist reporting on the killings, Jews are now fleeing France in droves, and they have been for several years in the face of increasing violence against them. *"Every single*

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*French Jew I know has either left or is actively working out how to leave,”* said Stephen Pollard, editor of the Jewish Chronicle. France has lost 100,000 Jews since 2013 to this exodus. “It is the largest emigration of Jews anywhere since the war,” Pollard said. *“That’s a simple fact.”* And it’s happening all over Europe.

I will not presume to make any infallible statement here about what may be going on behind the scenes, but I strongly suspect that what we’re now seeing is part of a fulfillment of God’s promise to bring the scattered Jews back to the Promised Land in the Last Days as recorded in Isaiah chapter 43:

**CLICK:** “Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” Isaiah 43:5–7

**And Jesus said:** “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Luke 21:28

**Amen – Come Lord Jesus.**

OK...

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The last time I spoke, we discussed the foundational Hebrew concept that there are **PATTERNS** in redemptive history. When something out-of-the-ordinary happens, the 1<sup>st</sup> question Hebrews asked was not “WHY” but rather “**What’s the pattern?**” If we can identify the Scriptural pattern, we can better understand what probably is going to happen next – even if we don’t understand ‘why’.

- If I flip a switch and the light comes on, then I can normally expect that when I do it again, the same results will occur – that’s the pattern.
- It doesn’t matter whether or not I am an electrician who can understand the ‘*why*’ of it; amateurs are just as successful in turning on the lights and flushing the toilets.

Understanding the reality of Biblical patterns provides a framework within which we can evaluate the numerous pronouncements and teachings that are bombarding the church today, tickling the ears with supposed new revelations.

- The message that ‘*Everything will be turning up roses*’ just prior to Jesus’ return is one of the latest such pronouncements.
- But, as we discussed last time, one of the Scriptural patterns is that Light follows Darkness, not vice-versa; therefore, we can be pretty sure that the church – rather

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than reigning on earth prior to Christ's return – will undergo persecution in the Last Days. I even recall that this is what Jesus said would happen.

- Again – we don't need to have PHD in theology to sort these things out if we know the pattern.

OK...

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**SLIDE: Holiness of God**

As I said, I want to talk about the Holiness of God. We've talked about this before, but this is a topic can never be exhausted, and it is foundational to any study in Scripture, particularly in the Book of Numbers.

The Scriptures say that God is *'holy'*. When we hear the term "Holy", we normally think of God's purity, His absolute moral and ethical excellence. That's certainly true, but the primary feature of God's holiness is that He is perfect and transcendent – which means that He is above and beyond ANYTHING in the universe. So, in this regard, the holiness of God is BEYOND description. He alone in His being transcends all created things. God is in a class all by Himself.

In our fallen state, you and I are anything but holy; but thru the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are being made holy, and one day when Christ returns, we will be completely sanctified, purified of all sin. **But, even in our glorified state, we will still be creatures, we will not be divine beings.**

But, you would not think that when browsing the Self-Help section of Barnes & Noble or listening to Joel Olsten TV broadcasts. Perfection, by their estimation, is just a matter of correct thinking.

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**SLIDE: Little Jack Horner**

Little Jack Horner  
Sat in the corner,  
Eating a Christmas pie;  
He put in his thumb,  
And pulled out a plum,  
And said 'What a good boy am I!

**And not to be called sexist, the rhyme goes on:** Little  
Jacquie Horner sat in a corner eating her Holiday pie.  
SHE stuck in HER thumb and pulled out a plum and said  
yum yum, yum—  
What a good GIRL, what a good GIRL, what a good GIRL  
am I!

- **What a good boy am I?** If I put my thumb into one of my mother's pies, that's the last words I'd expect to hear!

But today – Everyone gets a trophy, everyone gets a valentine!  
Self-esteem. We are wonderful... etc. I'm Ok, you're OK. The  
intentions are well-meaning of course, but it is a confession  
that SOCIETY DOESN'T HAVE A CLUE as to what  
GOODNESS really is or how it is produced.



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Consider this advertisement:

**SLIDE: GANDHI**

*“While many rose up for violence, he sat down for peace. Mahatma Gandhi reached out with the strength he cultivated within his soul.”*

The ad was developed by an organization called The Foundation for a Better Life. The goal is to create public service campaigns to communicate values that make a difference in our communities. Their belief is that people are basically good but sometimes just need a reminder.

They use inspirational thoughts about famous people such as Albert Einstein, Mia Hamm, and Jackie Robinson.

- (By the way, Gary, are you related to Mia Hamm?)

This particular ad holds up Gandhi as an example of what a person can do to change things for the good by drawing on the {quote} *“cultivated merit within his own soul.”*

Now, Gandhi is revered in India and other places as a “holy man”. His actual name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. *‘Mahatma’* is not actually a name but a title that means Great Soul. Great Soul: Gandhi’s religion was Hinduism, which teaches that thru reincarnation, your soul can be purified as it undergoes numerous rebirths; your good

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deeds and sufferings can purify you enough that you can eventually merge with god. In other words, you can save yourself without any need for Christ.

Of course, this theology is contrary to Scripture. It is actually just another variation on the Serpent's lie to Adam about becoming like God – only here, the process by which you become Divine is an evolutionary one, not a horticultural one.

Q: WHY did *Foundation for a Better Life* THINK that the Gandhi ad would be effective? What's the appeal of this argument? – The appeal is that it summarizes the belief held many people, even within the Church, that:

- deep down, most people are good. Whatever their religion or if they have no religion at all, people have the ability to reach within themselves and do the “right thing”. (Now, what is the “right thing” to do is personally subjective – radical Islam says killing Christians and Jews is the right thing).
- But the ad is directed at an American audience and therefore American values – *peace, justice and the American way* (superman fans). It appeals to the belief (or should I say our ‘hope’) that most people have a goodness within them and have the capability to tap

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into that goodness if they dig deeply enough and have courage.

- In other words, there remains a spark of the Divine flame still inside of us – as the Quakers believe – an Inner Light that we can fan into a good and holy fire.

I think that it would surprise many to know that such a belief was declared to be a heresy way back in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It is called Pelagianism. It totally disagrees with the Scriptural assessment of our spiritual condition.

The truth is that the standards for Holiness and Goodness are set by God Alone. Only He can state if someone or something is Holy. Scripture says that we have absolutely NO holiness or “goodness” in ourselves unless it is thru the Holy Spirit – and this only comes thru rebirth.

- How different from our perspective – we want the criteria to be “*good enough*” – not “*perfect*”.
- **No one is good or holy unless God declares it so.**

**CLICK: Holiness and goodness belong to God ALONE**

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Now, I have no argument with Gandhi's nonviolent approach to settling grievances or making changes in society. But, was he "a holy man"? Was he "good"?

- Jesus addressed this issue in His famous conversation with the rich young ruler.

**SLIDE: Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler**

"As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.'" Mark 10:17-18

A rich young man comes to Jesus and asks about what he can do to earn eternal life. The fact that he asks about what to "do" indicates that he thought he could enter God's kingdom by doing good.

In response, Jesus does not directly criticize him for this belief. Instead, Jesus asks the man why he was calling Him "good," for no one is good but God alone (v. 18). Jesus knew at once that He was talking to a man who had a superficial understanding of the meaning of the word "good". The man wanted to talk to Jesus about salvation. Instead, Jesus turned the conversation around to a discussion about what goodness was.

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Jesus asked: *“Why do you call me good?”* He highlighted the question with a strong statement: *“No one is good—except God alone.”*

- Now, Jesus is not denying His own goodness or His deity with this answer; He is trying to get the man to question his assumption that he knows what goodness is.
  - Given the right understanding, it would have been perfectly fitting for the rich young ruler to call Jesus good. Jesus was good. He was the incarnation of the good. **The point is, however, that the rich man was not aware of that. He was honoring Jesus as a man, a great teacher, but that is all he saw in Him.** He believed that men can become good based on their own merit and works

The rich young ruler obviously did not understand the meaning of Psalm 14: “The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; **there is no one who does good, not even one**” (Psalm 14:1-3).

*The “not even one” erases all possibility for misunderstanding. The human spirit recoils from such a universal indictment. Surely the Scriptures exaggerate, right? We ourselves know people who do “good”. We’re willing to*

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grant that no one is *perfect* – we all slip up from time to time – but that's only human.

This is precisely the way the rich young ruler was thinking. He was measuring goodness by the wrong standard. He was evaluating good deeds from an outward vantage point. **The logic of the Scriptures is this: Since no one has a perfect heart, NO ONE does a perfect deed.**

Jesus then lists the commandments dealing with our responsibility to our fellow men and tells him that if he does all these, he will enter the kingdom of God (v. 19). The man is quite pleased, and he professes that he has done this all his life. Then Jesus pulls out the rug from his feet.

(RC Sproul) “OK – you say that you have kept all the commandments since you were a child. Well, let's see. What is the first commandment? Oh, yes, “You shall have no other gods before me.” Let's see how you do with that one. Jesus put him to the test. If anything in the rich man's life came before God, it was his money. Jesus set the challenge precisely at this point, at the point of the man's obedience to commandment number one of having no other gods in the presence of the God of Israel. So, He says “Go, sell all that you have....” “

- **Jesus went “All In” and called the Man’s bluff, and the man folded.** He walked away sorrowfully, for he had great possessions. “

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He was put to the test of the Ten Commandments, and he flunked out after the FIRST question. The point here is not to say that a Christian must get rid of all private property. The point is for us to understand that obedience to the commandments actually requires more than just *doing* things, it requires a *change in the nature of our heart*.

Our human nature clings to the belief that we CAN work our way to salvation – that we CAN achieve holiness by our own effort – an echo of the temptation in the Garden.

And, the pervasiveness of this belief also reveals a profound DELUSION about what Holiness is. To counter this false view of reality, the Holy Spirit records many examples of the drastic difference between our view of holiness and God's view. Consider Moses...

**SLIDE: Moses**

“Because you did not trust in me, to show My Holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”

Numbers 20:12

My first example is the incident of Moses striking the rock twice for water – we covered this several months ago. Now – if anyone in the OT deserved a trophy, it was Moses. For 40 years, he had put up with a two to three million chronic

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complainers, heat, dust, thirst, and several rebellions against his civic and spiritual authority – one even from within his own family. He was surrounded by hostile neighbors inspired by Satan to stop this march toward the land where the Messiah would be born. And Moses held up extraordinarily well. There are only two people described in Scripture as Mediators – Jesus and Moses. But, toward the very end of the journey, Moses made one mistake, and for that, he lost what he was hoping for – entrance into the Promised Land.

- Why? As described in Chapter 20 of Numbers, God said that Moses failed to treat Him as holy in front of the Israelites when he disobeyed the command to speak to the rock rather than strike it in anger.

And for that, Moses was barred from entering the Land.

- And, as we saw, Aaron his brother ALSO was denied entrance into the Land because he stood by and said nothing during the affront to God's holiness.

And the next verse in the chapter states that God “proved Himself holy among them” (verse 13) when He dealt severely with Moses and others for their transgressions. I would have expected God to say *“I’ll let this go just one time, but be careful.”* But He didn’t, and the fact that God DID punish Moses was HOW God showed that Himself Holy to them.



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**SLIDE: Does God's Holiness Matter Anymore to the Church?**

Now. I want to ask this BLUNT question: – DOES GOD'S HOLINESS MATTER ANYMORE TO THE CHURCH?

Like I said – this is blunt, and probably ALL Christian churches would say a resounding YES – “*of course God's Holiness matters – that's a stupid question.*” **But, is it?**

OK – What do we think about Moses' situation? I don't mean just superficially accepting what happened – which most Christians tend to do – but think about it! We probably all would agree that Moses – of all people – would not intentionally disrespect God, right? He lost his cool, but he surely didn't **intend** any disrespect.

- We might not say it aloud, but a common opinion that we harbor is that the punishment does not seem to fit the crime.
- But – is this because our standards are *higher* than God's – which IS what we are saying when we question the punishment – or is it because our standards are *too low today?*
- Is the importance that God places on His Holiness so misunderstood or unappreciated by us that we cringe when God reacts in His righteousness to an attack on it?

**Good questions!**

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I believe that our *misunderstanding* about what Holiness is and what it truly Demands of us is the leading reason **why the sense of God's majesty is missing in so many churches today**. Like it or not, God's Holiness has much wider implications for us than most of us want to acknowledge.

- Just for example: consider the charismatic church's attitude toward modern-day prophecy. There are different types of prophecy, but the one I want to cite as an example is **predictive prophecy**. Predictive prophecy deals with things that will happen.
  - Example: Someone proclaims: [quote]: *"The Lord told me that if the church fasts for 3 days, the mayor will be healed of the incurable disease."*
- But then, after the 3-day fast, the mayor dies. What does the church do?
- **What does the church say about the failed statement?** Is it a sincere mistake, did they hear incorrectly? Was it pride, and more importantly – **DOES IT MATTER TO GOD?**
- The reality is that at least 75% of what is called "predictive prophecy" made by the recognized "prophets" in the churches is actually in error.

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- 75% or MORE of the time, the prophecy doesn't come to pass! It fails. This is NOT debatable – the modern-day prophets readily admit this.
- And yet, hardly anyone seems to be disturbed by this: rather, it's forgotten at the next Sunday service and these so-called prophets are *urged* by church leaders to try even harder in the hope that the success rate might improve slightly.
- **Think about what happened – someone made a false prophesy that misuses God's Holy Name as a guarantee of authenticity.**
  - That action violated the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment “not to take the Lord's Name in vain”!
- So, Q: Why is the ROUTINE violation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment – the attachment of God's Holy Name to false promises – not of any greater concern in the churches? Even more curious, why do the churches encourage these false prophets to try-try again – with an equal record of failure?

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- Does falsely prophesizing in God's Name not matter to God's Holiness anymore now that we are under grace and not under law?
- And specifically, will we like Aaron, who stood by and said nothing when Moses infringed on God's Holiness, will we also be judged equally guilty of disrespecting God's holiness?

These are serious questions. Please understand that I DO believe in the gift of prophecy for today. I'm using what I believe as an example of a **DEFILED** approach to prophecy to illustrate how far the churches have departed from the historical appreciation of God's Holiness.

- But, is this too harsh? Most people who are making these false prophecies are Christians who love God and are doing it in all sincerity, not meaning any disrespect. Since we're under grace, we're OK. God understands and sees our hearts – no harm, no foul. But... *is this a Biblical position?*
- The point I want to make is that actions that impact the Holiness of God MUST be MORE than our opinions of how things *should work* or our opinion about *what's OK* because we're now under grace.

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I think that you can see my passion here. This is not an easy topic, and I'm getting into it today because it is foundational to understand how great is the New Covenant that is made possible by the Cross of Christ. And I'm getting to this.

<MAY THE LORD BE ON MY MIND, ON MY LIPS AND IN MY HEART.>

Let's get back to Moses' penalty for striking the rock – why did He receive such a severe penalty for only one offence made without thinking? This seems to imply that we even held accountable for unintentional sins – is that true?

- Another good question. Let's get into it.

But first, I want to ask you a question – you don't have to answer out loud, but just use your imagination for a moment. What comes to mind when you hear the word “holiness” or a “holy” person? Ask that at Hannaford and you might hear: Mother Theresa – Billy Graham – Dali Lama – the Pope – Derek Jeter ...

- People do disagree with who or what is holy; there are even those who question whether there really is this thing called holiness, but deep down, we all know there is, and IT MAKE US UNEASY.

➤ **Holiness makes us uneasy???** Yes.

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- I saw this at my daughter Kristen's wedding. Bill graciously performed the marriage ceremony and he later related that, when he is officially at such functions, the discussions at his table tends to quiet down after people know who he is – a Christian pastor.
- Now, Bill doesn't claim to be holy – other than thru Christ. He avoids the title 'Reverend'. Still, awkwardness comes at the table comes when people realize that a Christen minister is in their presence – the reason is that a Christian minister represents the Holy One.
- Up until then, for someone at the table to curse – say, for example, Bill, if the conversation turns to golf – it would be inappropriate but not shocking in today's society. But once he is seen as a Christian pastor, if he were to curse, it would reflect on both himself – but more importantly – on Who He represents. Other people at the table also are now less likely to curse in his presence.
- **Why? Because God's Holiness makes us uneasy.**

**AND THAT IS HOW GOD WANTS IT TO BE.** But, much of the Christian church now preaches as if God could not be both good and dangerous at the same time. They want to portray God only as “good” according & that in a humanistic, earthbound definition of “good.” But, reality is that God's Holiness is dangerous.

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God reminds us of this thru many instances recorded in Scripture besides the one dealing with Moses's punishment. These incidents can shock people if you take to time to consider what actually happened. Take, for example, what happened to Nadab and Abihu...

**SLIDE: NADAB & ABIHU**

Nadab and Abihu were the two eldest sons of Moses' brother Aaron, the High Priest. They were themselves priests, and Nadab the eldest son was scheduled to succeed Aaron as High Priest upon his death. But, on the very day the Tabernacle was first dedicated and "open for business" – so to speak – God killed both of them because of an infraction of the rules. They came to offer incense to God with what the Bible calls "strange fire" and are struck dead by God.

**And, what makes this incident even more remarkable** is that just several weeks prior, God had summoned Nadab and Abihu specifically by name to accompany Moses, Aaron and seventy elders to go up on Mount Sinai. There, they had a spiritual vision of God and they sat down to share a meal in God's presence, without being harmed. Even Joshua was evidently not invited on this occasion. Anyone else – man or beast – that even touched the foot of the Mountain would die. They were important men.

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- And yet, soon thereafter, they were struck dead by God for trying to offer incense in a manner not exactly in accord with God's instructions.

**SLIDE: UZZAH**

Or, how about Uzzah? Remember when King David was transporting the Ark to Jerusalem in a cart (bad move – it could only be carried on the shoulders of Levites using special poles). Along the way, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled and the Ark started to slide off the cart into the mud. Uzzah – who was a Levite but not a priest – instinctively reached out to keep the Ark from falling, and he was struck dead. Why? Because God had said that no one **except a priest** was allowed to *physically* touch the Ark because it was Holy.

**SLIDE: Ananias and Sapphira**

And – one final example – this one from the New Testament, lest anyone think that God's standards and His view of the importance of His Holiness have lessened under the New Covenant. Ananias and Sapphira...

In the Book of Acts, chapter 5, we read:

"But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup> and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter



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said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. 6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

Three hours later, Sapphira his wife comes in and expresses similar deceit, and out SHE goes to the cemetery. Well... this certainly got people's attention!

Now – it is extremely rare that someone would get struck down today for lying – thank God, or this would be an empty room! **But just because it is rare today doesn't mean that we can ignore what happened!** This and all the other penalties were meant to serve as a sign.

- ❖ **God was taking something that is TRUE in the SPIRITUAL realm (that HE WILL NEVER ALLOW HIS HOLINESS TO BE VIOLATED) and He put it on dramatic display in the PHYSICAL realm.**
- **THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT!** God was taking something that is TRUE in the SPIRITUAL realm (**that God's Holiness is Who He is and He will defend it**) and put this truth on dramatic display in the PHYSICAL realm.

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Now, since the Holy Spirit supervised what was recorded in Scripture, He obviously wants to tell us about Himself and the Coming Messiah thru these events. **What is God saying to us here?**

**SLIDE: THINGS IN COMMON**

LET'S CONSIDER WHAT ALL FOUR EVENTS (Moses, Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, and Ananias and his wife) HAD IN COMMON: clicks:

1. *First of all, these people were “in the camp” – they were believers. The punishment had nothing to do with salvation – Moses later appeared with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration.*
2. *They had no intention of disrespecting God or sinning against Him. Thus, we are left to conclude...*
3. *God punished them for their unintentional sin against His Holiness*

**SLIDE: SAY WHAT?**

Think about this for a moment. Am I saying that when someone transgresses a law of God unintentionally – God still considers it to be an offence against His Holiness?

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<Click>: Yes

- Yes – but I'm ONLY REPEATING WHAT God has demonstrated.

Look again at what the Lord said was His reason for the punishment:

**SLIDE: I WILL BE TREATED AS HOLY**

Leviticus chapter 10 gives the following reason why Nadab and Abihu were killed: “Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the Lord spoke, saying,

**'By those who come near Me I WILL be treated as holy,  
And before all the people I WILL be honored.'"**

God's NOT talking about unbelievers here. These judgments had nothing to do with salvation. Those WHO COME NEAR Him must know how strongly He feels about His Holiness.

Here's where **I** tend to stumble. I tend to judge actions based on intentions. I don't believe that Nadab, Abihu, Uzzah, Moses or Ananias meant anything disrespectful in what they did. They might have been rash or stupid or greedy in what they did, but I don't read that they **intended any disrespect toward God**.

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- But, it is obvious that God **radically** disagrees with my evaluation criteria. My way of thinking is evidently skewed by my fallen nature.

I obviously do not fully appreciate what God did when He made the effort to dwell with us – and obviously neither did they. He reached down and established specific and unique criteria that could make it POSSIBLE for us to live in His presence. This was serious business, but they OVERESTIMATED their own Holiness and UNDERESTIMATED His. And so do we all. We all have a tendency to become complacent.

They people were not enemies of God. They were part of His people... Holiness was much more **dangerous** than they conceived it to be.

Think about how many times we offend God's Holiness unintentionally (we don't realize it). For example, the rich young man who Jesus understood placed his wealth before God. If he did this daily, that's 365 times a year he offended God's holiness. **If he was 20 years old, 7,300 times!** How can anyone think they can be good enough to be in the presence of a Holy God, that they can amass enough occasional good deeds to cover even one daily sin? This is why we needed a Savior Who took on sins on Himself.

We must not take Holy things lightly!

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- OK – we see that both intentional and unintentional sins are an offense against the Holiness of God and that something is required to restore a person's relationship with Him in order to be able to dwell in His presence.
- How were these breaches in relationship addressed in the Old Testament?
- Most Christians have an **idea** what of the purpose of the sacrificial system was, but I'd be willing to bet that they are unaware of a **major qualification regarding INTENTIONAL SIN** that is hidden in the not-so-small print.

### Leviticus & Sacrifices

To do this, I need to briefly talk about the Book of Leviticus. And – don't worry – I promise to not go into any great detail today. I realize that the Book of Leviticus is the most avoided Book of the Old Testament, especially by Christians. Our usual approach is to skip over it, saying that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sin is what it is all about and we don't need the particular details of the OT rituals. And that is true. But that doesn't mean that Leviticus is unimportant.

*Balaam: Oracle #2 Part III: Holiness of God*

**SLIDE –5 TYPES OF LEVITICAL OFFERINGS**

Very briefly – there were five basic ritual offerings in Leviticus, each having a specific purpose. The first three types of offerings were voluntary – the last two were mandatory. Mandatory offering must be performed because of a transgression of the Law or a stipulation in the Law when something occurred that caused ritual uncleanness but was not what we consider sin (ex. Childbirth and the need for purification).

- All five types required offerings: four of the five required animal sacrifices.

To clear up a popular misconception – the sacrificial system's purpose was **not** to extract a **penalty** from the wrongdoer. The sacrificial system was not an escalating system of PENALTY FEES or FINES in the form of more valuable or less valuable animals, the choice of which depended on the severity of your offense. The idea was NOT so much that the bigger the sin, the bigger and more expensive the animal you had to give up.

- You didn't pay a dove for a tiny sin, and a bull for a giant sin.

The sacrificial system was there to MAINTAIN your relationship with God, and to REPAIR it if it got broken as a result of your sin. It was there to BENEFIT the sinner far more than to

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appease God. And whatever form the appeasement of God was to be, it was not about paying Him off.....it was about obedience and reconciliation within His system of justice so that you could have your relationship with Him restored.

I want to talk about the 4<sup>th</sup> offering – the Sin Offering – but please notice that one of the offerings God established was one consisting of GRAIN.

- CLICK – This contradicts the well-intentioned but incorrect teaching that God accepted Abel's offering because it was an animal but rejected Cain's because it was grain. The reality is that God rejected Cain's offering because his deeds were evil and he did not offer the grain in faith!

Ok – let's get to the 4<sup>th</sup> Offering – the **Sin Offering** (Lev 4)

The SIN offering is Hebrew is the 'Hatta'at' – it is a term taken from archery, meaning to *miss the target*.

The sin offering is the one to which Christians most relate. It was a MANDATORY offering to atone (paid the debt in full) for an individual's weaknesses or sins before the Lord that caused them to need purification in order to restore their relationship with God.

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The idea that a sin brings *ritual pollution* is thoroughly biblical, and the reality of this pollution was dealt with under the sin offering. In some sense, the sin offering was really a “purification offering”.

Now, this offering *wasn't limited* to atoning for sinful actions – breaking the law. There were situations that needed purification due to ritual defilement in which a person did not commit a sin per se but came into physical contact with something that was Levitically “unclean” –

- Example: Contact with a dead body, or having a particular skin disease.
- Again – this is a strange concept for us – ritual uncleanness was something that could be passed thru physical contact. It was a physical demonstration of a spiritual reality of how all uncleanness makes a person unworthy to approach God.
- Remember when **Mary went thru a purification ceremony** in the Temple 40 days after the birth of Jesus – that ceremony was a sin offering (Leviticus 12:6) – not that she had sinned thru giving birth to the Messiah, but because the issuance of blood symbolized death and therefore made her ritually unclean.



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Now, the QUALIFICATION I want to point out regarding the SIN offering can be seen in the following text. It is in chapter 15 of the Book of Numbers; I skipped over it back then when we were discussing Chapter 15 – and I think it is time today to address it.

**SLIDE: Numbers 15**

“If an individual sins by mistake, he is to offer a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. The priest will make atonement before Yehoveh for the person who makes a mistake by sinning unintentionally; he will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. ....no matter whether he is a citizen of Israel or a foreigner living with them. You are to have one law for whoever it is that does something wrong, by mistake...” Numbers 15

➤ Do you notice anything you'd not expect to see here?

*Balaam: Oracle #2 Part III: Holiness of God*

**SLIDE:** “If an individual sins by **mistake**, he is to offer a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. The priest will make atonement before Yehoveh for the person who makes a mistake by **sinning unintentionally**; he will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. ....no matter whether he is a citizen of Israel or a foreigner living with them. You are to have one law for whoever it is that does **something wrong, by mistake...**”

- If someone sins unintentionally, by mistake! WHOA!
- HERE IT IS AGAIN – An unintentional sin is still a sin against God’s Holiness!
- And what’s more remarkable – and goes totally contrary to our way of thinking – an animal had to die to cover my unintentional sin because it threatened to pollute God’s holiness.
- Think about what this is saying. God declares that His Holiness is so Great that, in order for me to be in His presence, an innocent creature had to die to purify the guilt arising from an UNINTENTIONAL SIN.
- This tells us that God’s Holiness is involved in our lives much more than we ever expected!

Well, this came as a **definite shock** to me when I first noticed it several years ago. The SIN offering was ONLY for Unintentional sin

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- I assumed that the sin offering was for Intentional sin, something I did wrong that I *knew* was wrong when I did it, not for something I did wrong unintentionally and in all sincerity.
- **To make sure that I was reading it correctly**, I checked both major Jewish and Christian commentaries – I even check with a Jewish lawyer at work – and they agree – the sin offering was ONLY to address UNINTENDED SIN!

Today, society usually doesn't consider unintentional sin to be a sin – since we didn't mean to do it, we're not held responsible.

- Back as a Catholic, the Confession was for intentional sin; unintentional sin was given a pass because I didn't mean to do it.
- **MY benchmark for sin – sin being an offence to God – has been my intentions – but here Scripture shows that this is *completely off-based*.**
- ❖ **\*\*\* In reality, unintentionally spilling red paint onto a white rug is just as offensive to the whiteness of the rug as if it were done intentionally.**

*Balaam: Oracle #2 Part III: Holiness of God*

And this is precisely where this issue relates to our approach to prophesy today.

- The **SINCERITY** of the people who are giving false prophesy in God's Name DOES NOT matter.
- The fact that they are breaking the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment **unintentionally** DOES NOT matter regarding its sinfulness.
- **It still is an offence to God's Holiness.**

### Hope Chest

**SLIDE:** Let me give you an example from my life to illustrate how clueless I have been – and mostly still am – concerning God's Holiness. As I said, the SIN offering in Leviticus is called the 'Hatta'at'. It is a term from archery, meaning to miss the target, and when developing this presentation, it brought to mind a painful incident in my childhood.

- **Does everyone know what a 'hope chest' is?**
- A hope chest is a chest used by unmarried young women in anticipation of married life. In it, they collect items such as clothing and household linen in hopes of eventually setting up a household.

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- It is sometimes called a *dowry chest*, a *cedar chest* or a *glory box*. I don't know if it is still popular today, but it was at one time.
- Well – when I was about 11 years old, I received a bow & arrow set for Christmas. Not wanting to get cold outside, I decided to practice in our basement.
  - My father had hung a bed-sheet up across a small alcove in the basement and stored some furniture behind it.
  - My mother's treasured hope chest – no longer used, as she was now married – was sitting immediately behind the hanging bed-sheet, so I couldn't see it.
  - I set up my target on a chair *in front of* sheet.
  - First miss, thud – arrow didn't stick in (was using arrows with practice metal tips, not the hunting kind). I knew it definitely hit something solid. Looked to see what it hit, ¼" indentation in wood of the hope chest, *"that's not much damage"...*
  - Over time, 15 misses, resulted in significant accumulated damage. I wasn't *trying* to miss – I was actually trying to hit the target, but the damage was the same. My mother was devastated when she saw the damage.

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- I didn't mean any harm, but there it was. And, IF I *hadn't* seen my mother reaction, I STILL would not have understood the emotional hurt I had caused.
- And – if we hadn't see God's reaction to Nadab, Abihu, Uzzah, Moses and Ananias & Sapphria, we also would not know how seriously God takes His Holiness.

**YOU MIGHT SAY – THIS IS VERY DISCOURAGING!!!**

It's bad enough to be held responsible about my Intentional sins, but now God is telling me saying that I'm also responsible for my UNINTENTIONAL sins – which must be numerous and most of which I'll never know about in this life?

- What's the use? I'll never make it. And it is totally discouraging!
- Well -- “Yes – that's the Truth and that's the Point.”
- We can't make it by our own efforts – we can't possible correct things that we don't even know are wrong? We're doomed IF WE'RE LIMITED TO OUR OWN EFFORTS..

Balaam: Oracle #2

- the Levites had a similar concern. If you remember, back in Numbers ch. 4, we discussed how the Tabernacle was to be disassembled and the components and holy furniture carried when the cloud was leading the Israelites in the wilderness. The responsibility for carrying the Holy Furniture (Ark of the Covenant, menorah, altar of incense, etc.) fell to the Levite clan of Kohath, and the furniture had to be carried on their shoulders using special poles.
- They were not allowed to touch it. God was very specific – the furniture was holy because it had been in His presence; in fact, it was so holy that only a priest could touch it (this was why Uzzah was killed – he was only a Kothatite, not a priest). And furthermore, the furniture was so holy that only a priest could even **glance** at it when it was uncovered – anyone else who looked upon it uncovered would be immediately killed.
- This was deadly work for the Kothatites – you're required to be in the presence of holiness when you didn't have the level of holiness to even unintentionally look upon the holy. They felt doomed.
- So that they would not all be killed, God specifically ordered Moses to have the High Priest come in **first** and superintend the covering of the furniture before any Kohathite came in. This way, they would live.
-

Balaam: Oracle #2

- Do you hear the echo here of Jesus our High Priest?
  - Someone **greater** than us had to go in first and satisfy the requirement for us to be in the presence of Holiness.

SLIDE: Unintentional Sin & God's Holiness

OK – Now that we can see that even unintentional sin requires a sacrifice to remedy the offense against God's Holiness, let's quickly go back to the issue of modern-day prophecy – which in reality is false prophecy most of the time.

<CLICK>: 'Sincere but False Prophecies using Name of God in vain '

<CLICK>: '= Unintentional sin'

Please make a note of this. We may not have thought that unintentionally taking God's Name in vain thru false prophecy is sin, but Scripture plainly says that it is!

<CLICK>: 'Unintentional Sin is an affront to Holiness; sacrifice needed to atone.'

<CLICK>: '? We're now under grace because of Jesus' sacrifice, so God just smiles and says "no big deal"?'



Balaam: Oracle #2

This is exactly where most of the churches are today on this issue and many others, and this opinion is the reason why the sense of God's holiness is so absent.

**SLIDE: Unintentional Sin & God's Holiness (#2)**

- But, *God does not Change!*
- So His Holiness **STILL** matters to Him.

Many who have a stake in the predictive prophecy ministry today say that we play by different rules in the NT and failed prophecy now is acceptable. Well, some things have changed under the New Covenant, **BUT THE POINT IS THAT GOD HASN'T!** Ananias & his wife were in the NT! God DOES NOT CHANGE (Malachi 3:6, Numbers 23:19).

- So if unintentional sin mattered to Him back then, it matters to Him now! Else... He's going to have to apologize to Moses, Nadab, Abihu, Uzzah, Ananias and Sapphira

Now, Christ's death does cover our unintentional sin, so if we prophesize sincerely but falsely, that sin is covered by His sacrifice.

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- However, does this mean we have LICENSE to continue to offend His Holiness after we know certain things ARE offensive?
- Paul addressed a similar question: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”  
Romans 6:1–2
- There’s a lot to think about here, not just regarding prophesy but other areas of our lives!

OK – we’ve seen that Unintentional sin required the SIN Offering to restore the person’s relation with God. **But what happens with INTENTIONAL sin?** Continuing on in Numbers chapter 15...

**SLIDE:** “But, an individual who does something wrong INTENTIONALLY, whether a citizen or a foreigner, is blaspheming Yehoveh. That person will be cut off from his people. Because he has contempt for the Word of Yehoveh, and has disobeyed His command, that person will **be cut-off completely**; his offense will remain with him”.

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The Torah is very clear on this: **intentional sins (in general) cannot be atoned for with these sacrifices.** The person was permanently cut-off from God's family.

- This is surprising to many – that intentional sin is NOT done away with by the Sin Offering of Leviticus. What?

An intentional sin is sometimes described as “high handed”, or “great”. They were premeditated sins. “High handed” – like the athletes at the Olympics giving the Black Power salute.

It is a sin people commit knowingly.

- (I'm sure that *no one* here has ever don't such a thing in their lifeline, right?).

If the SIN offering wasn't applicable to INTENTIONAL sin, what could an Israelite do for an Intentional sin? The Hebrews knew they had a big problem here. The standard sacrificial system simply did NOT provide a way for an Israelite to reconcile with God, once that Israelite commits a “high handed”, or “great” sin.

- *But, how then could King David be reconciled with God after he knowingly had Bathsheba's husband murdered?*

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All of a sudden, we start to realize that something EXTRAORDINARY is needed to atone for intentional sin, something ABOVE AND BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION – something that can only be accomplished at the DIVINE Level!

What had infuriated the Jewish religious authorities about Jesus, even beyond His claim of being the Messiah, was that He was running around giving divine forgiveness to those who had committed INTENTIONAL sins!! Jesus told the woman caught in ADULTERY – an obviously intentional sin – that He would not condemn her but go and sin no more.

- Jesus was saying that the person who put their trust in Him could achieve reconciliation with God *even after* committing an intentional sin.
- Even the sacrificial system, the holiest most blessed, gracious and powerful part of the entire Hebrew justice system, couldn't do that!!

## SLIDE: DAY OF ATONEMENT

What covered intentional sin was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day once a year, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood from an innocent perfect sacrifice onto the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, and it would cover the sins of the people. The stipulation was,

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however, that the people “*afflict themselves*” on this Day (Lev. 16:29–34), which is a shorthand reference to self-examination and repentance. The sacrifices on that day would be effectual ONLY when the people were SINCERELY contrite

**There is great power in deep repentance.**

In Jesus being our High Priest carrying His blood into the Holy of Holes in heaven, Paul understood how Jesus fulfilled MORE than the Levitical sacrificial system for unintentional sin – Jesus’ sacrifice now offered the possibility of reconciliation from *Intentional sin also*.

- And I’m looking forward to Bill’s teachings on the Book of Hebrews where this is all spelled out.

That’s why Paul saw the New Covenant as vastly superior to the Old one, and Jesus Our High Priest was infinitely better than the old representatives who had the unfortunate tendency to die off on a regular basis.

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**Slide: Better Covenant & Better High Priest**

"... the Levitical gifts were offered according to the Law...served as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things...

Click: But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises."

Hebrews 8:1-6

SUMMARY

- God takes His Holiness a lot more seriously than we do.
- Unintentional sin STILL is sin against His Holiness and it needs a covering based on the blood of an innocent
- Sin doesn't go away just because it is unintentional or that it was done by MISTAKE by a SINCERE person.
- Christ's sacrifice alone covers both unintentional and intentional sin.

**SLIDE: Lady Macbeth**

OK, to wrap up, I want to use an illustration for the OT concept that sin makes one unclean – it is from the play Macbeth. I

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readily admit that my encounters with Shakespeare in high school **were forced upon me by my teachers**. Much of the stuff had to be explained to me as to what it meant, and trying to understand archaic English was like listening to someone from **India** trying to explain why my Internet Explorer doesn't work. Still, Shakespeare did have some good action scenes.

In the play, Macbeth was a Scottish general who received a prophecy by three witches that he would become King of Scotland. Lady Macbeth prods her husband into killing the King to fulfill the prophecy. King Duncan, who is their houseguest for the night, goes to bed, and Lady Macbeth drugs his attendants and places knives in the King's bedroom. Macbeth comes in and kills the sleeping King and brings the knives back with him. She tells him to return them, but he refuses. So, she takes the knives back to the room herself and smears the drugged attendants with blood to frame them. The couple then wash their hands to remove the evidence.

But Lady Macbeth is haunted by guilt, and in her own eyes can never totally remove the stain of blood. She washes her hands compulsively every day, saying "Out, damn spot".

Even though others CANNOT see the stain, she cannot help BUT see it. **To her, her sin was NOT an ABSTRACT concept but rather something REAL that polluted everything it touched.**

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She sleepwalks in profound torment and says: ***“Here’s the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia couldn’t make my little hand smell better.”***

Lady Macbeth’s agony reflects the greatest challenge under the Old Covenant – what to do with guilt of Intentional Sin. Jesus said that the remedy is to come to Him WITH REPENTANCE – repentance is a MANDATORY ingredient

- It’s not *“come just as you are”* but come WITH REPENTANCE. Unlike Lady Macbeth’s smell of blood, **repentance is a sweet aroma to God**. Our lives are hidden in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. **And HE smells like grace**.

But, and here’s my Catholic conscience showing thru, how do we really know that we have **repented SUFFICIENTLY?** If you’re like me, there is a nagging suspicion that occasionally creeps up and makes me doubt that I have. Have I done enough? What will I do if I face the Holy God feeling like this?

**Why do I still have these thoughts? Probably because there still is a part of me that clings to the false idea that I CAN be holy by my own efforts – and I know that I’m not.**



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In some sense, it actually was easier for me when I was a Catholic – you confessed your sins and heard the wonderful words “*Ego Te absolvo*” – “I absolve you.” You heard those words and any lingering doubt about the sin melted away.

Satan whispers his charges against us in our ear and we can become discouraged, because we know that, in truth, oftentimes he is right – his charges of specific sin ARE correct. He also has the habit of trying to make us feel guilty with *vague* accusations – although untrue, this still bothers us. The aroma of guilt sometimes envelopes us, as it did Lady Macbeth.

When Satan whispers accusations in your ear, I recommend that we do as Martin Luther did: answer him with “SO WHAT?” I AM saved thru grace and not of my own goodness. Don't let your sense of guilt win – give it to Christ. As 1John 1:7-9 says, " if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from **ALL sin**....If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- His blood cleanses us from ALL sin, both unintentional and intentional.

*Balaam: Oracle #2*

To the Question: Have **I** done enough? Jesus answers–  
*No – but you could never do enough, but I have done it for  
you. “Ego Te absolvo.” “I absolve you.”*

Amen.

Come quickly Lord Jesus!