

3. Jesus in Leviticus

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No other Book in the OT paints more about Jesus than this Book, Leviticus. You may wonder why I used the word 'paints' rather than 'talks'. It is because it describes in many different ways, as if an artist is drawing a portrait of Jesus as the Chief High Priest and the Mediator.

The title 'Leviticus' is the Latin form of the Greek title of this Book. It means "pertaining to the Levites." The content of the Book of Leviticus was given to the Israelites during the year they camped at the foot of Mount Sinai where they also received the Laws of God for them. It was the time between the exodus from Egypt and their wilderness wanderings.

Soon the Israelis realized that their God has been more interested than just rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, rather He wanted to have a relationship with them. He was willing to come down from Mount Sinai where He talked with Moses alone, to dwell in the midst of them and to build the gap between deity and humanity.

Another very important thing about this Leviticus is that its significance was designed to become obsolete. Before you run out the door so that you can grab rocks to stone me, please hear me. I said that its significance was designed to be obsolete, not in the applications. No Scripture is obsolete in its application or outdated like many liberals would like to believe.

This Book's contents were for the Israel priests of the OT to follow the ways of sacrifices and feasts according to God's way, not in their own ways. This God's way still applies to the 21st century people. To be saved, it must be done in God's way through Jesus only. If we are going to have a relationship with Him, worship Him, and follow Him, we all must do them in His way, not ours.

As I taught you guys in our studies of the Book of Hebrews, Leviticus and Hebrews are always to be kept together. Without one Book, you cannot really understand the other.

Leviticus falls neatly into two parts:

The first 17 chapters teach us about the way to God. The way to approach God was by blood sacrifice. God deliberately planned it that way. If the Hebrews, the sinners, wanted to come to God, the Holy One, the only way was through that God-honored cover – the blood of sacrificed animals. It covered up their sins. God honored it. And so for 17 chapters, the Lord spells out how sinners could reach God, how they could find cleansing from sin and be right with Him.

In the second section of this Book, chapters 18-27, the Israelis learned directions for the walk with God. This portion of Leviticus teaches how sinners could stay in touch with a holy God.

A. JESUS THE TOTAL CONSECRATION

Leviticus 1:3 'If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord.'

We, the American Christians, have this sanitized version of the sacrifices that mentioned in the OT and our Lord Jesus' crucifixion – a really clean, not bloody, not messy image. I don't know if you have been in a butcher's shop. It is like that. This is great. We talk about the scene of a butcher shop right after a wonderful Agape Feast. For the sake of those who have a weak stomach, I will stop here.

The first sacrifice mentioned in the Book of Leviticus is "Burnt Offering." This one requires the total consumption of the animal on the altar. It is a vivid image of the complete dedication of Jesus Christ – the total consecration of His life. This burnt offering gives us an application that we as Christians, our life should be totally consecrated to the Lord.

B. JESUS THE SWEET AROMA

Leviticus 2:1 'When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it.

I am not much of a bread eater, more of a meat eater. But I still like fresh baked breads or rolls. It has such a sweet aroma. The grain offering represents all the work of God the Son for God the Father. This offering represents Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life, the perfect One who nourishes our inner person as we worship Him and meditate and study His Word. This explains why God laid down such strict conditions for the offerer to meet before the grain offering would be accepted.

As many of you know, olive oil in the Bible often speaks of the Holy Spirit. You noticed that here it is "oil upon it." In v4-5 it is "mingled with oil". In v6 it is "pour oil on it". And in v7 it is "with oil."

The prominence of the Holy Spirit in the human life of Jesus is very noticeable. He was born of the Spirit in Luke 1:35 – "mingled with oil." He was baptized of the Spirit in Matt. 3:16-17 – "oil upon it." He was led of the Spirit in Mark 1:12 – "pour oil on it." Jesus taught, performed miracles, and offered Himself in the power of the Holy Spirit – "with oil."

This word picture of the Holy Spirit with Jesus makes us ask ourselves a question: If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit this much even though He was God Himself, how much more do we need Him to live the life that glorifies the Father in heaven?

C. JESUS THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Leviticus 3:1-5 'When his offering is a sacrifice of a peace offering, if he offers it of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord. 2 And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. 3 Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire to the Lord. The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, 4 the two kidneys and the fat that is on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove; 5 and Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is on the wood that is on the fire, as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

The peace offering speaks of the communion and fellowship of believers with God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is our peace who has broken down every wall for us that we may enter into the holiness of God through His blood of reconciliation.

This was not an offering to make peace with God, but an offering to enjoy peace with God. The whole reason Jesus made peace between the Father and the believer is so that the peace could be enjoyed.

D. JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNER

Leviticus 4:2-3 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them, 3 if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering.

Man was a sinner before the giving of the Law, but actually it was the Law which revealed to him that he was a sinner. The sin offering was offered during all of the Jewish feasts – Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, and Tabernacles. And whenever the offerings were presented to the Lord, the sin offering had to be the first one, because sin had to be dealt with before they dedicated themselves totally to the Lord and have peace with Him.

Where the burnt offering leaves off; the sin offering begins.

The burnt offering tells who Christ is; the sin offering tells what Christ did.

In the burnt offering Christ meets the demands of God's high and holy standard; in the sin offering Christ meets the deep and desperate needs of man.

In the burnt offering we see the preciousness of Christ; in the sin offering we see the hatefulness of our sin.

The burnt offering was a voluntary offering; the sin offering was mandatory.

Sins of ignorance reveal the underlying truth that man is a sinner by nature. We are a sinner, whether we know it or not. Religion is men's desperate effort of their own justification – reconciling with God. The problem is that we are not holy enough to get to God. God is too holy for Him to defile Himself. There had to be a mediator who had to build a bridge between God and mankind – Jesus the Messiah.

E. JESUS THE ATONING SACRIFICE

Leviticus 5:14-16 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 15 "If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the Lord, then he shall bring to the Lord as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering. 16 And he shall make restitution for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

The trespass offering and the sin offering were very similar in both ritual and meaning. Even the names sometimes interchange. The trespass offering had more reference to sins that had done definite damage to the tabernacle service or to a neighbor. This offering required repair of the damage and a penalty of 20 percent in addition.

Chapter 5 explains the trespass offering, and chapter 6 and 7 talk about the law of the five offerings we learned so far. As I said before, it is a common Jewish literary style to repeat what the author already talked about, but in more detailed manner.

F. JESUS THE HEALER

Living in the wilderness can be quite a challenge without any permanent sanitation facilities. In chapters 11-17 we read about laws for cleansing. Here we find infor-

mation on diet and foods that were considered clean and unclean by God. In chapters 13 and 14, the Lord gave them the law concerning leprosy which is a symbol of sin.

Like leprosy, sin deadens a person's spiritual senses and breaks down our resistance. The things that we once thought we'd never do become no big deal. Like leprosy, sin horribly disfigures a godly man or woman to an ungodly backslidden person. Like leprosy, sin is contagious, and it isolates those who are infected. Like leprosy, sin can only be cured by a touch of God.

Leviticus 14:1-7 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. 3 And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, 4 then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. 5 And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. 6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. 7 And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

The steps in the leper's cleansing and restoration is such a beautiful picture to us as what Jesus Christ has done for sinners:

1) Since the unclean leper wasn't permitted to enter the camp, the priest had to go outside the camp to minister to him or her.

Since we couldn't come to God, Jesus came to us. The Greatest Physician, our God, makes house calls to each sinner right where we were.

Luke 19:10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

2) Birds don't belong to earthen vessels, they belong to the heavens.

Jesus came down from heaven and became a man.

3) Cedar wood is extremely resistant to disease and rot and it represents sinless Jesus as a man as well as a symbolic reference to the wood of the cross.

4) Scarlet is the sign of faith in the blood of Jesus.

Scarlet should be translated as a scarlet thread or yarn. It also reminds us that Rahab was instructed to put out a scarlet cord as an evidence of her faith.

5) Hyssop represents the faith of the individual.

It is the appropriation and the application of the redemption in Christ. The Israelites used hyssop to apply the blood of the lamb over their door post and lintel right before the first Passover so the death angel would pass over them.

6) One of the birds that was killed in an earthen vessel, of course, represents the physical body of Jesus Christ on the cross.

7) Over running water represents the Holy Spirit.

Note that it is not the water that sits, rather running water – fresh and living water.

8) The living bird that was dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water and is released in an open field represents the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus was killed for our sins and stayed in the tomb, we have nothing other than a dead Messiah wanna-be. But our Savior's tomb is empty and He is risen. That gives us hope for our own resurrection and new life in heaven.

9) The priest shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy.

Without shedding of the blood, there is no remission. Of course, the blood of Jesus is perfect to save souls of men.

10) The priest shall pronounce him clean.

How did the victim know he was clean? The priest told him so. How do believers today know that God has saved us? He tells us so in His Word. No matter how the leper felt or what he looked like, God said he was clean, and that settled it.

As I said before the entire Book of Leviticus is one description of Jesus after another. We don't have enough time to cover them all tonight. I expect you to study on your own.