

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Lesson 6, October 12, 1997: The Book of Leviticus, Part I

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Preface:

The Book of Leviticus has, at the same time, been called a bore, a bother, and a blood bath. Some say it doesn't belong in the Bible, others say it is the greatest and most important book in the Old Testament. Seeing that it is a book given to direct Israel, a Holy nation, and to guide its personal and national relationship with a Holy God, it merits our close attention.

In his book, *Exploring the Scriptures*, John Philips says, "In Exodus we see how God gets His people out of Egypt. In Leviticus we see how God gets Egypt out of the people. " Every physical exercise was given to teach Israel a spiritual truth.

Leviticus and Numbers are two books where we may be justified in studying every minute detail in order to gain insight into New Testament truth. Every detail of the sacrifices, celebrations and the tabernacle is a type or foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus and His substitute sacrifice for our redemption. These are great studies.

Introduction:

Ancient rabbis called the third book of the Bible "The Law of the Priests," or "The Law of the Offerings." The Hebrew word that starts the book is translated "and He called."

When the Latin Vulgate was translated from Hebrew and Greek the translators called this book Leviticus because it deals almost exclusively with the sanctuary service of the Levites. It is, in fact, the Levite's manual of rules for leading worship in Israel.

The Book of Leviticus starts, "Then the Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting (tabernacle), saying 'Speak to the sons of Israel . . .'"

All of Leviticus and the first 10 chapters of numbers occurred between the first day of the first month and the twentieth day of the second month following the erection and God's filling of the tabernacle (end of Exodus) and departure from Sinai (end of Leviticus). Just 50 days! Historically there are only four events recorded in Leviticus:

1. Receiving of the Rules (Laws)
2. Consecration of Aaron and his sons
3. Death of Nadab and Abihu
4. Stoning of a blasphemer

There are many lessons to be learned from Leviticus, but for me, the most practical and important ones are:

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1. The way to God is by sacrifice. (Atonement mentioned 45 times)

2. The walk with God is by sanctification. (Holiness 87 times)

God says again and again, "Be holy, as I am holy." (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; 20:26, etc.)

OUTLINE:

I. The Laws of Offerings (Chapters 1-7)

We deride the Jews for not being obedient all the time, but it took real faith to follow through with the details of worship, even though God was there. There was no way they could understand the total typical significance of all this stuff.

They were, to them, a very practical provision under the law for the problem of sin and its guilt done over and over in sheer terror or love response to a very scary Holy God. These instructions were to help bring order and perhaps a degree of understanding to this complex process. Question: Did any of these sacrifices satisfy God? 10:4 -- "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls or goats to take away sins." Then why bother: Hebrews 10:3-- "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year."

A. Sweet Savor Offerings (1-3)

These were called fragrant offerings because they were given unto God in obedience because God asked, not for benefit of persons presenting them and the aroma wafted up to heaven.

1. The Burnt Offering (1)

This was to be a daily act of worship, offering a sacrifice of one's best to God. (Like Rom. 12:1 & 2) It was not meant to be pretty or pleasant (each person killed their own animal), but was to remind them of the seriousness of sin.

Since bulls, sheep, goats, turtle-doves, or pigeons were acceptable, the people learned that God accepts gifts that are in proportion with what they have. No less than their best, but no more than they have. These are also defenseless animals.

2. The Meal Offering (2)

This was a devotional gift to God and was a product of a person's own hard labor, a harvest product of meal or flour. This gave the Israelite a chance to thank God for His provision and blessing. (Like offerings)

3. The Peace Offering (3)

This was a sacrifice of communion and thanksgiving. The priest and the offerer sat down in the presence of God and feasted together. (Like communion) Only once a year the High Priest chose two spotless goats, kills one and sacrifices it then takes its blood into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle it onto the "Mercy Seat" of the Ark of the Covenant. This is the supreme illustration of God's mercy. Even though they don't deserve it, God forgives the entire nation their sin.

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C. What Is A Scape-Goat?

The other of the two goats chosen is picked by lot to be the Scape Goat. The High Priest places his hands on its head signifying the laying of Israel's sins upon it and then it is led out to be set free "in a land not inhabited."

V. The Laws of Holidays (Chapter 23)

A. Purpose of Festivals

The purpose of the sacrifices was to draw Israel near to God. To renew their personal relationship with Him. The purpose of the festivals or holidays or feasts was to remind Israel of God's faithfulness and care and thus keep them close. Build relationship/Keep Relationship. All these events included gathering for fellowship, feasting, patriotism, and worship.

B. Other Offerings (4-5)

This was an act of repentance to deal with attitudes and acts.

1. The Sin Offering (4, 5)

The worshiper now becomes a convicted and repentant sinner. This blood sacrifice covered sins of error, weakness, omission, and ignorance, NOT DELIBERATE OR REBELLIOUS SIN. (Confession and repentance) Everything was designed to show to God and the nation, a sinner who is serious and responsible and repentant. Sin is a radical problem needing a radical solution.

2. The Trespass Offering (5, 6)

This offering was always accompanied by a repayment both to God, who is offended by sin among His people, and to the person defrauded. (David, "Against you and you only I have sinned."-- Joseph, "I cannot sin against God.") This was presented whenever a sin was committed or a duty neglected toward God or toward other persons. (Personal confession and correction)

C. Regulations (6-7)

These two chapters explain how the sacrifices meet the needs of the priests who have no land or other way to make a living. They are supported by the people.

II. The Laws of Consecration (Chapters 8-10)

A priest is one who represents the people to God, as opposed to a prophet who represents God to the people. The priesthood was perpetual and would be applicable to the Nation of Israel until Jesus, the "better Priest," the Great High Priest came.

A. Consecration of Priests (8)

Israel's first official priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses. They were both from the tribe of Levi, which was later set aside to minister to God in the more secular aspects of tabernacle service. (Upkeep of tabernacle, Choir, Teaching and Instruction, etc.)

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Only Aaron's sons and descendants were actually able to be priests. Since later all the kings would come from the tribe of Judah, obviously no priest could also be a king. Elaborate instructions were given concerning the consecration, robing, office, and function of the priests.

B. Ministry of Priests (9)

The ministry of the priest consisted first of cleansing themselves, offering sacrifices for their own sins and then presenting sacrifices for Israel, both as a nation and as individuals. It was a strenuous job and took many priests and assistants to offer daily ministry to the people. The High Priest, Aaron, was the only priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to atone for the sins of Israel once a year.

C. Restrictions on priests (10)

There were a number of restrictions placed on priests:

1. No wine or strong drink while serving.
2. Rules for eating of things sacrificed, in Holy Place, outside.
3. The fire from the brazen altar was considered "Holy Fire" because God actually consumed the first offering Himself (see vs. 24, Chapter 9) and this fire was to be used in the censers to burn incense before the people. Nadab and Abihu found out how serious God was about this.

III. The Laws of Holiness (Chapters 11-15 and 18-22)

The personal rules of cleanliness and dietary laws were medically sound as well as setting many valuable spiritual lessons of separation before the people of Israel.

These laws were broken into three broad categories:

1. Food; 2. Disease; 3. Personal hygiene

Most people agree that, basically, these rules are sound and Jews following these rules have tended to be a very healthy people. With all its failings, practicing Jews still tend to be healthy, and moral. The keeping of these laws became not only acts of obedience, but part of the Jewish culture. This is where the problem of legalism began.

A. Food and Hygiene (11-15)

Diet (clean and unclean foods), purification of women and diseased persons, and rules about blood.

B. Application of Commandments (18-20)

Practical applications of laws and punishments for disobedience.

C. Priests Standards (21-22)

General rules and laws of purity for the priest are spelled out. They are held to a much higher standard.

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Homework:

Read: Finish or Re-read the Book of Leviticus

Think: About the great once-for-all gift God gave us by making His Son, Jesus our substitute sacrifice, once and for all.

Apply: Live this week in great thanksgiving because we can have personal contact with God without killing animals.

Bible Survey Lesson 7: The Book of Leviticus, Part II

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Introduction: In Deuteronomy 30, Moses said to the children of Israel, "Now what I have commanded you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up to the heaven so that you have to ask, 'Who will ascend unto heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, so that we have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us so we may obey it?' No, the Word is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it."

"This day I call heaven and earth as witness against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curses. Now choose life. "

V. Laws of Atonement (Chapter 16-17)

The Day of Atonement marked the most solemn of all the many days on the Israeli calendar.

A. Why A Special Day?

All year people sacrificed, confessed, tried to obey . . . to be good. But, what about the laws they forgot, didn't know, omitted, etc.?

B. What Is It?

Israel needed a day when the sins of the entire nation are called to memory . . . and dealt with. ALL SIN FOR ALL PEOPLE FOR ALL YEAR, PAID FOR!

VI. The Laws of Sabbaths (Chapters 24-26)

Even God himself "rested" after creating our known world. Did God need rest, was he tired? I think not. There a clue in what he did on that "seventh day." "God looked at all He made and said, "This is very good."

A Sabbath was, and is, a time for reflection on a week of hard, honest labor. It was for the Israelite, as it should be for us, a time of recapping our walk with God as we do all the stuff we must do. Sabbath is, like everything else in our lives, an act of worship.

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A. Seventh Year Rest For Land (25)

v. 4 -- Every seventh year you rest the land

1. Land to lay fallow--renew its potency
2. Remind them they don't really own it, it is a stewardship
3. Rely on God for their existence (Manna in wilderness)

Ultimately GOD GIVES THE INCREASE.

B. Seventh Year Rest For People

vs. 5-- The natural produce of the land goes to the people, the poor, the slaves, and their cattle so they don't have to work and can focus on their relationships with God and others.

C. What does this have to do with the Babylonian Captivity?

The people did not keep these Sabbatical years, and that, along with other disobedience, is credited for their being ripped from their land and taken as slaves into Babylon. -- II Chronicles 36:21

VII. The Laws of Jubilee (25)

A Jubilee year was planned for the entire nation of Israel to happen every 50 years. This could have been the most glorious event in the history of mankind, let alone the history of Israel.

A. The Fiftieth Year

vs. 10-- The playing field was leveled as welfare can never do

1. Each person returns to his own family to his originally apportioned land.
2. Land reverted back to original owners (every family had)
3. Debts were to be cancelled and personal property returned

B. Provision

vs. 20-- What will we eat?

vs. 21-- Same as sabbatical, God will bless

Answer: *"I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year if you do not sow or gather in your own crops"*

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C. God Owns The Land, People are stewards

Main lesson: Don't get wrapped up in physical things. They aren't yours anyway. vs. 23-- *"The land moreover shall not be sold permanently for the land is Mine for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. "*

Think and apply this week: The bloody offering reminds us of the high cost of sin in our lives. The special days remind us of God's faithfulness and provision. What will my response be this week--PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP!