

Leviticus 1 - Thursday, August 13th, 2009

- Having completed Genesis, then Exodus, we now “move the ball downfield” as it were, to this very important Book of Leviticus.
- I think that we have to be honest when we talk about the Book of Leviticus because, well quite frankly, it’s just a bunch of rituals.

- While it’s true that Leviticus is a book riddled with ritual, it’s all the more true that the ritual communicates and illustrates powerful truths.

“What is the essence of religious ritual in the Bible? It is the means of communication between God and man, a drama on a stage watched by human and divine spectators. Old Testament rituals express religious truths, visually as opposed to verbally. They are the ancient equivalent to television.”
Gordon Wenham

- Perhaps this would explain why Jewish children would read the book of Leviticus first, before any other book in the Bible.
- The Mishnah, which is a commentary on Jewish law, says; “Little children are pure, and the sacrifices are also pure, let those who are pure come and occupy themselves with the pure things.”

As one Bible commentator said it: “If the Book of Genesis shows us depravity and condemnation, and the Book of Exodus illustrates redemption and salvation then surely the book before us speaks of separation and consecration.”

- The Book of Leviticus is the third book of the five books of Moses, a.k.a. the Torah or “Pentateuch,” “pent” meaning five, i.e. pentagram.
- The name of the book, of course, describes the nature of what is in the book. It’s an instruction manual of sorts, for the Levites.
- This may explain why the Book of Leviticus is unfortunately, not read, studied and especially taught today. We think it’s not for us today.

“The laws which the Lord gave to Moses in reference to sacrifices, [in the Book of Leviticus], are all deeply instructive and every detail deserves earnest study...”
Charles Spurgeon

- So instructive is the Book of Leviticus that it is quoted over 100 times in the New Testament. In other words, this book is for us now.
- The Book of Leviticus is a survivalist’s handbook in how it instructs us to live holy and godly lives in an unholy and ungodly world.
- Suffice it to say, there’s probably never been a better time to be in the Book of Leviticus, given the times we find ourselves living in now.

- Before we jump into the book, allow me, by way of introduction, to provide what I’ll call; the What, Who, When, Where, Why and How.

WHAT:	A handbook or law book of sorts, to outline the priestly duties in order to be holy as God Himself is holy
WHO:	Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar
WHEN:	Approx. 1445 BC (It’s interesting to note that the book of Leviticus only covers about a one month period of time)
WHERE:	The foot of Mount Sinai (They would be there for two years from Exodus 19 - Numbers 10)
WHY:	For a life a purity and holiness (The word holy or holiness is found over 80 times in Leviticus, more than any other book)
HOW:	By five (Hebrew number of grace) offerings which picture the person of Jesus Christ and the finished work on the cross

1:1 Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying,

- It’s important we understand, now that the tent of meeting has been prepared, it’s now time for the meeting in the tent to be prepared.
- Lest you say that this is just a play on words, you must remember what the purpose for the Tabernacle was in the first place.
- It was the place where God could both meet with, and commune with His people, because of His infinite love for His people.

- However, there’s a problem because imperfect and “unholy” people cannot meet with nor be in the presence of a perfect and Holy God.
- Enter “The Tabernacle,” a foreshadow of “The Christ,” Who became a man and offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins forever.

Hebrews 10:12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 10:10 We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Isaiah 53:10 You have made His soul an offering for sin

Ephesians 5:2 As Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma

- Problem solved: God so loved His people in the world, He sent His only begotten Son to become flesh and Tabernacle amongst them.
- Sin, which once separated man from God was paid for in full in Christ’s offering and sacrifice on the cross reuniting us with and to God.
- Because of the “The Tabernacle/The Christ,” God can now meet with and sup with His people, and His people can in turn sup with Him.

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock -- of the herd and of the flock.

- As we’ll see shortly, all these offerings in the these five chapters, will both picture and point to the offering and sacrifice of the Christ.
- Actually, the first seven chapters deal with these voluntary and mandatory offerings. 1-5 are to the people, and 6-7 are for the priests.

- Also, notice that these offerings were to be brought from their own livestock which was their livelihood, and not just any wild animal.
- In other words, the offering must cost something. It needed to come at a price, for what would be deemed obvious reasons in typology.

2 Samuel 24:24 24 Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. NKJV

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.

- Here we start with the "burnt offering," and right out of the shoot, we need to notice two important aspects about this one offering.
- First, it was to be a male and without blemish, it couldn't be a lame one that would die anyway. Second, it was to be of his own free will.
- Jesus was without spot or blemish, and offered Himself of His own free will as a burnt offering that would be sacrificed for our sins.

- It's interesting to note that Israel would disobey this and offer lame, blind and crippled sacrifices to God. We see this in Malachi 1:8.

Malachi 1:8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts. NKJV

- Before we move on to verse four, there's something else here that we need to understand about this free will burnt offering to the Lord.
- One reason for this burnt offering being of one's own volition was so that they could be consecrated for, and dedicated to, the Lord.
- One commentator said it this way: "true dedication can only be made from the heart. ...It's not from responsibility, but from response."

4 Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

- Notice that in order to be accepted, they had to put their hand on the animal's head that was being offered as a sacrifice for their sins.
- It's so vital we don't miss this here's why? There was no acceptable atonement without the identification with sacrificial offering.
- In other words, the sacrificial death of the animal was not sufficient in and of itself. The one receiving atonement had to identify with it.

- Perhaps I can connect the dots this way; Jesus' sacrificial death brings atonement on my behalf, only when I identify with Him.
- Let me say it this way: The identifying with Jesus; is the transferring my sin to Jesus, making acceptable my atonement by Jesus.
- What's "atonement?" At-one-ment. I am reunited with and at one with God because of the Jesus' shed blood and sacrificial death.

- Now, there's a difference between what atonement meant to them in the Old Testament and what it means to us in the New Testament.
- In the Old Testament atonement is the Hebrew word "kophar" meaning to cover, where as in the New Testament means washed away.
- By way of illustration; you may cover the stain on a pure white table cloth, but how much better it would be to have them washed away.

5 He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting.6 And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.7 The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire.8 Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar;9 but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

- This seems to indicate that the Israelite himself would have to kill the bull before the priests then, Aaron and his sons sprinkle the blood.
- Interesting how they skinned the burnt offering before it's to be sacrificed. Jesus was skinned before He was to be sacrificed.
- Notice that the sacrifice was to be placed on the "wood," that was apparently in a certain order on the fire. I suggest it was as a cross.

- It's also interesting to note that this offering made by fire on this wood symbolic of the cross, was a sweet aroma before the Lord.

"How sweet the offering up of the Son was to the Father! "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2). The burnt-offering was an imperfect type of his entire devotion to his Father's will. When Jesus saw the inability of man to keep the holy law, and volunteered to magnify it, and make it honorable; when He laid aside his glory, and stepped down from his throne, saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God"; when He became obedient even to the death of the cross — it was as sweet to God as the fragrance of a garden of flowers to us." F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

10 'If his offering is of the flocks -- of the sheep or of the goats -- as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. 11 He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar.12 And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar;13 but he shall wash the entrails and the legs with water. Then the priest shall bring it all and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

- If one did not own a bull, they could bring a sheep or a goat instead, however, it was to be offered basically the same way as the bull.
- One suggested that the bull represents Jesus carrying the burden of our sin, the lamb takes away our sin, and the goat became our sin.
- Be that as it may, this aspect of the offering is in such graphic detail because the crucifixion of Christ on the cross was so graphic.

"Let us never forget the God-ward aspect of the cross. The sacrificial fire fed on every part of the sacrifice, on the inwards as well as the carcase; so did the Holy God delight to witness the spotless and entire devotion of the Son to the great work in which the entire Godhead was most deeply interested. The fragrant graces of Christ were made manifest on the cross, and are perpetuated in his intercession."

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

14'And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the LORD is of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or young pigeons. 15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out at the side of the altar. 16 And he shall remove its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar on the east side, into the place for ashes. 17 Then he shall split it at its wings, but shall not divide it completely; and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

- If one did not own a bull, sheep or goat that would not and could not keep them from this offering. They could bring doves or pigeons.
- In other words, it's not what you gave as an offering, or even how much you gave as an offering, it's that you gave what you could give.
- No matter what, this free will offering was just as fragrant, just as precious, and just as acceptable to the Lord, and before the Lord.

"There is a sense also in which our consecration to God is fragrant and precious. When we see his claims, and yield to them; when we submit to his will, and commit our lives wholly to his direction; when we offer and present ourselves to Him, a living sacrifice, keeping nothing back — his heart is gladdened, and his fire of complacency feeds on our act. Always count on this; you may feel no thrill, and see no light, but reckon on God, believe that He accepts what you give, and will crown today will surrender to God, and become an offering of a sweet savor?"

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

- Here again it is critical that we understand the detail given to us as to the manner in which the birds were to be offered as a sacrifice.
- Every detail of every sacrifice with every offering, points to the perfect sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ in his bloody and brutal death.

Ch. Vs.	THE OFFERING	HIS OFFERING
CH. 1	VOLUNTARY BURNT OFFERING - PAYMENT FOR SIN	JESUS IS OFFERED AS A VOLUNTARY PAYMENT FOR SIN
5	A burden carrying bull was to take their place.	Jesus carried the burden of our sin in our place.
11	It is slaughtered at the north side of the altar.	Jesus was crucified at the north side of the temple.
14-17	The bird with the feathers plucked off and the wings spread out and put on the wood.	Jesus was from heaven like a bird, His beard plucked off and His arms spread out on a wooden cross.