

03 - Leviticus - Be Holy for I am Holy

1:1-27:34

Key Verse: 11:45b

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS

The key verse of Leviticus is 11:45b: "Be holy, because I am holy." God is holy. He wants his people to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). But people are not holy; we are sinners. God teaches us in this book that the wages of sin is death, and that without the atoning blood there is no forgiveness of sin.

Leviticus 17:11 says that blood stands for life; God accepts a blood sacrifice as atonement for sin. Hebrews 9:22b says, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

The Levites were appointed to be responsible for the sanctuary. Levites who were also descendants of Aaron were priests.

The whole sacrificial system looks forward to Jesus, the Lamb provided by God to take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Jesus is our high priest and Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. His death gives the sacrificial system meaning and, at the same time, makes it obsolete.

Outline of Leviticus

1:1-7:38 The 5 offerings

8:1-10:20 The priesthood

11:1-15:33 Clean and unclean

16:1-34 The Day of Atonement

17:1-22:33 Holiness in life

23:1-25:55 The Sabbath, holy days, seasons

26:1-27:34 Reward and punishment

THE FIVE OFFERINGS

Leviticus 1:1-13; 7:37-38

Key Verse: 5:17-18

(Read chapters 1-7)

1. Instructions for the offerings (1:1-13)

Read through chapters 1-7, noticing the five types of offerings. (See 7:37,38) i) Burnt offerings. Read 1:3,4. The blood was to atone for sin; the rest was burned to represent total commitment to God. ii) The grain offering was for thanksgiving; some was burned on the altar and some eaten by the priests. Read 2:1-3. iii) A fellowship offering was made to make peace with God through the forgiveness of sin, and to express thanks to God. Read 3:1,2; 7:11,12. iv) The sin offering was made for unintentional sins. Sins were confessed, forgiven, and cleansed. v) Guilt offerings were made for sins which required restitution. Read 4:1; 22-26; 5:17-19; Heb 9:11-14.

2. An aroma pleasing to the Lord (1:9,13,17;2:9;3:5)

These sacrifices all point to Jesus, the Lamb without blemish (Eph 5:2). His death on the cross was cruel and painful. His blood atones for sin and enables us to go to God to offer acceptable sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise (Heb 13:15,16).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for forgiving my sins through the blood of Jesus and giving me peace with you.

One Word: Come to God through the blood

THE OFFICE AND WORK OF THE PRIESTS

Leviticus 8:1-17; 9:22-10:11

Key Verses: 9:23,24; 10:3

(Read chapters 8:1-10:20)

1. The glory of the Lord appears (8:1-9:24)

Aaron and his sons were chosen to be priests. They were dressed in beautiful clothes to cover the ugliness of their sins, and atonement had to be made for them (8:30). They could only stand before God to serve him and his people as forgiven sinners. The purpose of all the sacrifices was to cleanse the people so that the Holy God might dwell in their midst. When everything had been done according to God's command to Moses, God's glory filled the tabernacle, and the people shouted for joy. This was a glorious climax.

2. Nadab & Abihu—presumptuous sinners (10:1-11)

Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's 2 oldest sons. When they offered sacrifices in their own way, fire came out from the Lord and consumed them. Aaron was forbidden to mourn their deaths; he must be a servant of God before he was a father.

Prayer: Lord, help me to serve you with a humble heart, in your way, according to your word. Cleanse us of sin and send your Spirit to dwell with us.

One Word: Fear God and obey him

BE HOLY, BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY

Lev 11:44-47; 12:1-6; 14:1-9

Key Verse: 11:45

(Read chapters 11-15)

1. Consecrate yourselves and be holy (11:44-47)

Chapters 11-15 tell us that God demands cleanness and purity of his people. The regulations about clean and unclean animals were canceled by Jesus (Mk 7:14-23). But the principle is still valid. God wants us to have pure hearts, clean hands and chaste bodies. Letting our minds dwell on lewd things makes us unclean. God wants us to consecrate ourselves to him.

2. The purpose of ceremonial cleansing (12:1-15:33)

No person is an island. Each life affects the lives of others. Chapters 12-15 describe how unclean persons may be cleansed and restored to the community. Jesus' parents obeyed the regulations of chapter 12. Sin is an infectious disease. No person's sinful life is only a personal matter. He influences society. So the community must take seriously both contagious diseases and moral pollution. The priest was responsible for keeping the community clean.

Prayer: Lord, purify my heart and life by the blood of Jesus. Help us to stop the moral pollution of our times.

One Word: Be holy as God is holy

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Leviticus 16:1-34

Key Verse: 16:34 (See Heb 9:1-15)

1. Sprinkled blood (1-19)

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place to sprinkle the atonement cover with the blood of sacrifices. The high priest himself was a sinful man, so he had to be cleansed and prepared. The atonement cover rested on top of the ark of the covenant. It was the throne of God--where the Holy God met sinful men (2). Inside was the Bible. The atoning blood covered God's righteousness with his mercy. By God's grace, the sprinkled blood purified everything and everyone. The Day of Atonement looked forward to Jesus, the sinless high priest who offered his own blood to atone for our sins and the sins of the world.

2. The scapegoat (20-34)

After making atonement for sin, Aaron laid his hands on the live goat, called a scapegoat. He confessed all the sins of the people and put them on the goat's head. Then he drove the goat out into the wilderness.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for shedding your blood for the sins of the world and for my sins once and for all, and for bearing all my sins in your own body.

One Word: Only Jesus' blood atones

THE LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

Leviticus 17:1-16

Key Verse 17:11

1. Don't offer yourselves to demons (1-9)

God's people must worship God alone. We must give him our best. Fat represents the best of one's material possessions. God does not want his people to give their bodies or their possessions to the devil. We must offer ourselves and what we have to God. And we must worship God in God's way.

2. Life is in the blood (10-17)

In Genesis 9:4,5 eating blood was forbidden because blood represents life. Blood was set aside to offer as an atoning sacrifice to God. It was treated as precious to add meaning to the sacrifice of atonement. Sin is a life and death matter. "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23a). Blood sacrifice is the way of atonement God provided. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament look forward to and find their meaning in the atoning death of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world (Isa 53:5; Jn 1:29).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus' atoning death and for his blood that cleanses all of my dirty sins. I want to offer myself and all I have to you alone.

One Word: He gave his life for me

DON'T LIVE LIKE THE CANAANITES

Leviticus 18:1-19:37

Key Verse: 18:5; 19:2

1. The corrupt cultures of Canaan & Egypt (18)

God forbids his people to indulge in sexual immorality (ch. 18). God is holy. His people must also be holy. The things he prohibits reveal how corrupt the Canaanite culture was. God's people cannot conform to worldly culture. If sexual immorality is rampant, nations, families and individuals will die. Those who obey God's laws will live (5). Immorality defiles the land (25); God promised that the land would vomit out those who defile it. Sexual immorality destroys; love builds up.

2. Love your neighbor as yourself (19)

"I am the Lord" is repeated 15 times in chapter 19. The chapter begins with, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." (2) It ends with, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt." (36) We belong to God twice: He made us; he redeemed us. He is the Lord. He commands us to love and obey him and to love each other. His laws tell us how. The Ten Commandments are basic.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love others; help me not to conform to the world.

One Word: Don't live like the Canaanites

DO NOT PROFANE MY HOLY NAME

Leviticus 20:1-22:33

Key Verses: 22:31-33

1. Consecrate yourselves and be holy (20:1-27)

God's punishment for sin is severe because he loves his people. They must consecrate themselves to him and be holy in order to inherit and live in the good land, the land flowing with milk and honey. The sins which God abhors and will punish are: offering children to the pagan god Molech; breaking spiritual order in the family by cursing one's parents; committing various acts of sexual immorality and/or perversion. God's people must keep God's laws and grow as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

2. Priests and offerings must be holy (21:1-22:33)

Aaron and his sons were priests. They were set apart for God's service; so they must keep themselves clean in body, mind and spirit. They were given special privileges and special responsibilities. They would be put to death for treating God's requirements with contempt. God redeems his people and makes them holy. God's servants must acknowledge him as holy.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me by the blood of Jesus. Keep me from presumptuous sins. Make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

One Word: Do not profane God's holy name

KEEPING THE APPOINTED FEASTS

Leviticus 23:1-44

Key Verse: 23:1,2

1. To glorify God and enjoy him forever (1-22)

The Lord commanded his people to set aside certain days each year to worship God and rejoice in him. Keeping these special days planted in them a sense of history. On the Sabbath day we also worship the God of creation who raised Jesus from the dead. We are commanded to keep the Sabbath day holy. The Passover celebrates deliverance from bondage in Egypt. We also must remember God who delivered us from bondage to sin. The Firstfruits and Feast of Weeks are times to thank God for his blessings on the work of our hands, and times to offer to God the firstfruits of our labor.

2. Forgiveness and remembering (23-44)

The Feast of Trumpets heralds the Day of Atonement. This is the time to come to God for forgiveness. The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of remembering God's care in the wilderness. He also cares for us throughout our pilgrimage of life.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your grace of forgiveness. Help me to take time to worship you and to rejoice before you.

One Word: Worship God; remember his grace

LOVE AND FEAR GOD

Leviticus 24:1-23

Key Verse: 24:3,8

1. God is present with his people (1-9)

There were two symbols of the living presence of God in the Holy Place. One was the seven lamps on the lampstand. The light of God's Presence was always in the Holy Place. The second was the Bread of the Presence. Twelve loaves, one for each tribe, were placed on the golden table on the north side of the Holy Place. Fresh bread was put there each Sabbath, and the old bread was eaten by the priests in a communal meal. The Bread was a reminder that God is the Sustainer of life. Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of Life." Our spiritual lives are sustained when we partake of the Bread of Life daily.

2. A man who blasphemed the Name (10-23)

God loves his people and comes to dwell with them, but he is holy and demands respect. One young man, part Egyptian, blasphemed the holy Name of the Lord. Even though he did this in the heat of a fight, there was no excuse. He was put to death by stoning. God's justice is also a reflection of his holiness.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your Presence with me. Teach my heart to fear your name.

One Word: Love and fear the Holy God

PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE LAND

Leviticus 25:1-55

Key Verse: 25:10

1. The Sabbath year (1-7)

Every seventh year the land was to rest. It was not to be plowed or planted, and the vines were not to be pruned. Whatever it yielded naturally could be used for food, if it was taken directly from the field. Even the land needs a Sabbath rest.

2. The year of Jubilee (8-55)

The 50th year was the year of Jubilee. A trumpet blast on the Day of Atonement proclaimed liberty throughout the land. Everyone was to return to his own property. All Hebrew slaves were set free because no matter who else they might serve, they belonged to God. God redeemed them from Egypt (54-55). The land also belongs to God; his people are aliens and tenants, so they must be good stewards (23). The poor got a fresh start in the year of Jubilee. God's people must not be slaves to men or to materials. He created us; by his atoning blood he redeemed us from slavery to sin so that we might serve him. True freedom is only possible when men acknowledge God as the owner of their lives and property.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for true freedom.

One Word: Proclaim liberty and rejoice

GOD WALKS AMONG HIS OBEDIENT PEOPLE

Leviticus 26:1-13

Key Verse: 26:12

1. If you obey my commands (1-9a)

God does not want his people to worship anyone or anything other than himself. He wants us to obey his word. If we obey his commands and live according to his word, he will pour out

blessings upon us. The land will produce so abundantly that we cannot even keep accurate records. God will protect us from all enemies, give us victory over them, and keep us in peace (6-9).

2. I will keep my covenant (9b-13)

God promises to keep his covenant with his obedient people. His best blessing is to put his dwelling place in their midst, to walk among them, and to be their God. God broke the yoke of Israel's slavery in Egypt; he breaks the yoke of our slavery to sin and enables us to walk with heads held high. Only those who belong to God can be really free.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for breaking the yoke of slavery to sin and giving me real freedom. Help me to walk with you and serve you each moment of today so that I may claim your victory.

One Word: Obey God; enjoy his blessing

THE TERRIBLE COST OF DISOBEDIENCE

Leviticus 26:14-46

Key Verses: 26:40-42

1. If you do not listen and obey (14-39)

God's people have his word. If they do not listen to his word and obey him, they are violating the covenant relationship. God will withhold his blessing. If men continue to be hostile toward God, he will be hostile toward them. God punishes his people with famine and with invasion by evil men and wild animals. People without God must live in fear; they will reap the bitter harvest of utter selfishness. The purpose of God's punishment is to break men's stubborn pride and let them suffer so that they can repent and be saved.

2. But if you confess your sins (40-46)

If God's people confess their sins and the sins of their fathers and circumcise their hearts with repentance, God will remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He did remember his covenant, and he sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for loving us enough to punish us when we sin. Circumcise my heart so that I may know humble Jesus and walk with him.

One Word: Circumcise your heart

REDEEMING WHAT IS THE LORD'S

Leviticus 27:1-34

Key Verse: 27:2

1. Keep vows made to God (1-29)

Whenever a person vows to dedicate himself or any of his property to the Lord, that vow is sacred and should be kept. A dedicated animal is offered as a burnt offering. Since God does not allow human sacrifice, a set redemption price must be paid for a person who is dedicated to the Lord. The person making the vow must redeem what he has vowed to give to God with the equivalent value in money. No one should make a careless vow to give something to God, for whatever is given to God is holy.

2. The tithe belongs to God (30-34)

Some things already belong to God: The firstborn already belongs to God, for he redeemed them from death in Egypt by the blood of the passover lamb. A tithe (one tenth) of everything belongs to the Lord. A person who does not give to God what belongs to him is sinning against God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to keep the promises which I have made before you. Help me to tithe faithfully, so that I may not be guilty of keeping what belongs to you.

One Word: Give to God what belongs to him