

Preview of Leviticus

This third book of the Pentateuch deals primarily with the ministry of the priests and the religious laws by which Israel was to be governed. The opening verse indicates that Leviticus is a continuation of Exodus. The children of Israel were still at Sinai, receiving instruction from God through Moses. Repeatedly throughout this book, we find phrases such as "and the Lord spoke" and "and the Lord said." Leviticus elaborates on what had already been revealed and unfolds many more details not given in the Book of Exodus.

A key word in the book is the Hebrew word usually translated holy. This brings into focus the overtone of this revelation how sinful man can approach God, who is holy.

The Levitical religious system had a twofold purpose. First, it emphasized the barrier of sin that barred man from God. Second, because God foreknew man's dilemma, He provided a plan to restore man to a close relationship with Himself.

The offerings spoke of God's provisions for approaching Him. Through mediation of the priests, those provisions were applied. The laws of separation revealed the conditions that man must meet in order to approach God.

The feasts of consecration revealed the benefits of coming before God. The Jubilee, the Sabbaths of the land, and the voluntary vows signified a restored relationship.

It was imperative that the Israelites would remain separate from other nations so that they could be God's people and so that He might reveal to them and through them a true knowledge of Himself. God also intended that the performance of their religious duties would continually point them to the promised Messiah. The Levitical system certainly typifies the person and work of Christ very beautifully.

Lesson 1 – 1 May 2011

The Holy Offerings—Expiation

Lesson Scope: [Leviticus 1-7](#)

Lesson Focus

Israel as a nation had been redeemed from the bondage of slavery in Egypt by the grace and power of an omnipotent and holy God. The first-born of Israel had been spared from death by the blood of the Passover lamb. God had promised, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:12-13). In the Passover lamb, God began to reveal types and shadows of the coming Saviour. God clearly showed that the shedding of blood was necessary for man's salvation.

Israel was encamped before Mt. Sinai. At God's direction, they had erected the tabernacle. God continued to reveal Himself to His people by instituting the Old Testament sacrificial system. A people serving a holy God must approach Him with holy offerings.

The Levitical offerings teach that sacrifice is necessary sinful man to be accepted by the holy God. These divinely planned offerings not only foreshadowed but also depended upon Christ's completed sacrificial work.

The sacrifices Israel were commanded to offer foreshadowed the work of Christ. No type in the Old Testament is perfect or complete. The atonement involves many aspects. One type teaches one aspect, while another type focuses on a different aspect. Theologians have much debated the exact nature of the atonement. We do best when we simply say about the atonement what the Bible says and state the truth simply in Bible terms. Use the types and shadows to help us see what they clearly exemplify, but do not stretch the types to an extreme.

The sacrifices also portrayed the response of the worshiper. They powerfully refute modern Christianity with its shallow expressions of consecration.

Lesson Aim: To portray the spiritual significance of Levitical offerings.

Theme Verse: [Hebrews 9:14](#). "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Lesson Text:

Burnt Offering

[Leviticus 1:1-5](#)

And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, ²Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, *even* of the herd, and of the flock. ³If his offering *be* a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. ⁴And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that *is by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Meat Offering

[Leviticus 2:1-2](#)

And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be *of* fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon: ²And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, *to be* an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD:

Peace Offering

[Leviticus 3:1-2](#)

And if his oblation *be* a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer *it* of the herd; whether *it be* a male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. ²And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.

Sin Offering

[Leviticus 4:13-14](#)

And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done *somewhat against* any of the commandments of the LORD *concerning things* which should not be done, and are guilty; ¹⁴When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.

Leviticus 4:17-18

And the priest shall dip his finger *in some* of the blood, and sprinkle *it* seven times before the LORD, *even* before the vail. ¹⁸And he shall put *some* of the blood upon the horns of the altar which *is* before the LORD, that *is* in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which *is at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Leviticus 4:21

And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock: it *is* a sin offering for the congregation.

Trespass Offering

Leviticus 5:15-16

If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering: ¹⁶And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

Questions for Study

Burnt Offering

1. What were the features of an acceptable burnt offering?
2. Explain the Old Testament concept of atonement.
3. What are the motives for the believer's total consecration to Christ?

Meat Offering

4. What is essential for an offering to be a sweet savor unto the Lord?

Peace Offering

5. What is the basis of peace with God?
6. What blessings follow peace with God?

Sin Offering

7. How does the sin offering typify Christ? How is Christ's offering better?

Trespass Offering

8. Give guidelines for discerning when restitution or public confession of sin is necessary.

Analyzing the Passage

The key word, atonement, occurs twelve times in the lesson scope. Literally, it means "to cover" (with bitumen or pitch). God directed Noah to pitch the ark within and without with pitch (Genesis 6:14), a dramatic type of salvation. Figuratively, atonement means "to expiate, condone, placate, or cancel.

For men, atonement means the forgiveness of sin (Leviticus 5:16) and acceptance with God (Leviticus 1:4). For God, atonement is "a sweet savour"—the pleasure of peace and fellowship with those who are in covenant with HIM.

The Levitical sacrifices were constant renewals and reminders of God's covenant. "Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalm 50:5). The use of salt in all offerings typified the covenant relationship (Leviticus 2:13). The meat (or meal) offering especially was to remind the people of God's covenant.

The burnt offering was the normal sacrifice for an Israelite in proper covenant relationship with God. It symbolized entire surrender to God. The atonement element in the burnt sacrifice applied to man's general depravity.

If God's covenant were broken, whether individually or collectively (Leviticus 4:2, 13), a sin offering was required. Sin offerings were also offered for the whole congregations on all feast days, especially on the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest also offered for himself.

The trespass offering was a special kind of sin offering. The sin offering made atonement for the person of the offender: the trespass offering atoned for the act.

The sin offering symbolized general redemption. The trespass offering was required when the rights of God or of men had been violated. For such sins, the wrong needed to be made right, the broken law honored, and the sin atoned for by a trespass offering.

The peace offering signified rest, fellowship, fulfillment, and peace with God. The offerer, his family, and the priests ate this sacrifice in a festive fellowship meal.

In every offering God was given the fat, representing the best.

Principles and Applications

Burnt Offering

1. God revealed to man the pattern for holy worship (Leviticus 1:2). The Old Testament sacrificial system originated in the mind of God. It was

carefully designed to foreshadow the final sacrifice that Christ would offer once and for all. Sacrifices were not devised in the minds of men with the vague hope of appeasing an unknown god.

2. God accepts nothing less than total consecration (Leviticus 1:2-5). Many times God rebuked His people and rejected their sacrifices because they were offered with reservation. In contrast, Christ stands as our supreme example of total consecration. As He stood ready to fulfill all sacrifices, He said, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

3. An acceptable sacrifice needed to be without blemish (Leviticus 1:3). Jesus "offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). The perfection of Christ was verified by God Himself (Matthew 3:17), by His disciples (John 1:14), and by Pilate (John 19:4).

4. Sacrifice to God must be voluntary (Leviticus 1:3). Love must motivate obedience. Obedience, not sacrifice, is the foundation principle of God's covenant (see Exodus 19:3-9). Loving obedience issues into loyalty to our God and His cause. Love, obedience, and loyalty move us to offer our whole being on the altar of sacrifice.

5. God required a blood sacrifice to atone for sin (Leviticus 1:4-5). "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). The curse of sin is death. Blood, representing life, is the price of redemption. The blood of animals, although innocent, could only foreshadow the sinless blood of Christ, who became man that He might redeem men and be the propitiation for sin.

Meat Offering

6. God accepts a life sacrificed in service to Him (Leviticus 2:1-2). We must serve the Lord by the power of His Holy Spirit (symbolized by oil). Prayer (symbolized by frankincense) lays the cares of life upon the Lord. In prayer we seek the Lord's direction for our service: we bring our needs and those of our fellow men to the only One who can meet them and we look to Him to reveal how His Word applies to the needs of our life. Do we love to pray as much as God loves to hear the prayers of His saints?

Peace Offering

7. Peace is experienced when sin is forgiven and the will is fielded in total consecration (Leviticus 3:1-2). Atonement is an Old Testament word signifying the covering of sin. Propitiation is a corresponding New Testament word expressing the fullness of the provision for our peace with God. The sacrifice of Christ reconciles man to God and brings peace beyond what the Levitical offerings could provide. The angels announced this great rec-

conciliation. "On earth peace, good will from heaven toward men:"

This peace ends the restless searching for something new, exciting, or charismatic. We are complete in Christ, no longer seeking fulfillment in money, sensuality, or prestige.

Sin Offering

8. Ignorance of does not relieve man of guilt (Leviticus 4:13). Ignorance is not bliss. We are responsible to know God's Word. Even though a man may sin in ignorance, he is still guilty. For example, divorce and remarriage are not excusable simply because those involved were unconverted or were unaware of God's standard.

9. The sin offering was a type of Christ, who suffered without the camp (Leviticus 4:21). "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:11-12).

Trespass Offering

10. God requires restitution for sin to restore relationship with Him (Leviticus 5:15-16). The "holy things of the LORD" in our time are not material. The church is sacred in God's sight. When her testimony is damaged, when the reputation of godly persons is slandered, or when the standards of the church are weakened, do we require confession and restitution for the wrong done? What we require indicates a view of sin that will either soften or harden our hearts.

Important Teachings

1. God revealed to man the pattern for holy worship (Leviticus 1:2).
2. God accepts nothing less than total consecration (Leviticus 1:2-5).
3. An acceptable sacrifice needed to be without blemish (Leviticus 1:3).
4. Sacrifice to God must be voluntary (Leviticus 1:3).
5. God required a blood sacrifice to atone for sin (Leviticus 1:4-5).
6. God accepts a life sacrificed in service to Him (Leviticus 2:1-2).
7. Peace is experienced when sin is forgiven and the will is yielded in total consecration (Leviticus 3:1-2).
8. Ignorance of sin does not relieve man of his guilt (Leviticus 4:13).
9. The sin offering was a type of Christ, who suffered without the camp (Leviticus 4:21).
10. God requires restitution for sin to restore relationship with Him (Leviticus 5:15-16).

Answers to Questions

1. What were the features of an acceptable burnt offering?

The burnt offering was to be a male from the cattle, of the herd, or of the flock. The poor could offer turtledoves or young pigeons (Leviticus 1:14). The offering was to be without blemish. It was offered of the worshiper's voluntary will. The offerer placed his hand on the head of the burnt offering. The priest sprinkled the blood round about upon the altar. The entire sacrifice was burned.

2. Explain the Old Testament concept of atonement.

The root meaning of atonement is "to cover." Atonement and expiation in the lesson title have the same meaning. Sin is a failure to meet obligation, for which satisfaction must be provided. Expiation speaks of this satisfaction. However, this satisfaction for sin needed to be repeated again and again, showing the limited value of Old Testament sacrifices as compared to the sacrifice of Christ "once for all."

3. What are the motives for the believer's total consecration to Christ?

Love for Christ motivates obedience and loyalty. The Holy Spirit operating in our life makes the sacrifice of our life acceptable to God.

4. What is essential for an offering to be a sweet savor unto the Lord?

For an offering to be a sweet savor unto the Lord, it must be the best that the offerer can give (typified by the fine flour). The pouring of oil on the offering teaches that we must be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The burning of frankincense shows us our need of prayer and God's desire to hear the prayers of His saints. Salt, which was to be offered with all offerings, is mentioned especially with the meat offering (Leviticus 2:13). This signified God's covenant with His people. An offering is a sweet savor to God only when His people are obedient to His covenant.

5. What is the basis of peace with God?

In both the Old and the New Testaments, peace with God depended upon a blood sacrifice and a covenant relationship with Him.

6. What blessings follow peace with God?

The peace offering signified reconciliation with God and communion with Him. This blesses the soul with spiritual rest, fellowship with other believers, fulfillment in life, and assurance of salvation.

7. How does the sin offering typify Christ? How is Christ's offering better?

In comparison to other offerings, the special focus of the sin offering was atonement for sin by the shedding of blood. This blood was sprinkled before the Lord, even before (but not within) the veil. Only once a year on the Day of Atonement did the high priest enter behind the veil. The shedding

and application of this blood foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. The sacrifice of Christ opened the veil, allowing every believer to enter the presence of God Himself.

8. Give guidelines for discerning when restitution or public confession of sin is necessary.

Sin needs to be confessed according to who has been affected. Sins that affect the power and testimony of the church need public confession. Restitution must be made for harm that has been done. Untruths that harm must be corrected; however, inexactness in conversation with no harm or intent to deceive does not always require a correction. An extra-sensitive conscience may need help with this. Mistreatment of others, unkind words, partiality, unfairness in business, and slander must be corrected. Words that may be true in one sense but that give a false impression must be made right.

Summarizing the Lesson

All the rivers of blood that flowed from Old Testament ceremonial worship only asked the question ten thousand times, "Can the blood of an animal atone for the sin of my soul?" The prophet asked, "Shall I give my firstborn ... for the sin of my soul?" Centuries later John the Baptist answered, in words still ringing today, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Research Guide

1. Look up "Sacrificial Offerings" in Unger's Bible Dictionary.
2. See "Sacrifices" in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary.
3. Read the chapter titled "The Atonement" in *Doctrines of the Bible*. One caution: This chapter fails to treat atonement as the distinctly Old Testament concept that it is. The original Hebrew word translated atonement signifies a covering of sin that falls short of a finished work. Christ accomplished more than that. The word atonement appears only once in the New Testament, translated from a Greek word otherwise rendered reconciled or reconciliation. Sacrificial atonement for sin ended when Jesus gave His blood to wash away sins (Revelation 1:5).