

# The Preface and the Purpose

*Bible Study Lessons on Leviticus and Hebrews*

Vol I  
**Leviticus**  
**The Preface**

Marchant A. King, D.D.

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# Marchant A. King, D.D.

Biographical Notes by his daughter, Ruth King Dix, M.D.

Marchant Askren King was born of English descent, February 7, 1903, on a farm in Minnesota. After several moves because of his mother's health, the family settled in York Valley in Southern California.

Because life was difficult financially, Dad raised a large garden to help out. He enrolled in ROTC during high school; and, while taking an unbelievable course load at Occidental College from which he graduated Phi Beta Kappa with several majors, he taught at a private school his father established. Yet he found time to climb the face of Eagle Rock in his bare feet!

Plans to be a medical doctor and missionary were laid aside for want of finances; but, learning of the need for Bible translators in Africa, he secured passage on a boat and sailed through the Panama Canal to enroll at Princeton Seminary and University in New Jersey.

Dad's ability in languages was awesome. He majored in languages, learning Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic and Amharic. He already knew Latin, French, German and Spanish. He never mixed up any of them and stated that one did not really know a language until he could dream in it. He spent many extra hours with professors on special projects and earned Masters and Theology degrees simultaneously.

His spiritual journey began early at home and involved memorization of scripture passages. At age nine he recited John 10, 13 and 14 to his father and then prayed his decision to trust Christ as Savior. He was baptized the next Sunday.

At age 80, two years before his death, he recorded all the details of his decision and discussed the special Sunday School teacher of his early years, the influence of preachers and small church groups and Mr. Paul Walker of the Fisherman's club. Dad was well mentored and responsive to these men. He then carried out this same process, mentoring many others.

Romance came later for Dad than most of his friends and was limited to his courtship of Grace May Hamilton, a school teacher in New York City whom he

married September 1, 1929, after graduating from Princeton. The wedding took place in the bride's family apartment with only close friends. But a three-week honeymoon on a lake in the Adirondack Mountains started the couple on the right path. To quote Dad: "We had a very suitable time with a little Greek thrown in."

At the end of one year as an associate pastor in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, Dad accepted a call to an independent church in Newburgh, New York, where he served for 14 years. My brother Paul and I were born during this time.

Two difficult and disappointing times in Dad's life are noteworthy. The first was at the end of Seminary/Graduate School when he was rejected for missionary service in Africa and lost a fellowship because of his conservative theology.

The second came during his pastorate when controversies arose in the Presbyterian denomination that centered on the supremacy of Scripture as the only infallible rule of faith and practice and on the importance of the Lord's Supper. Although ordained by the Presbyterian Church, Dad resigned, defended his position before the Synod, and was granted independent status. In both cases, Dad accepted the change as God's sovereign design for his life and never voiced any regret.

My recollection of these years growing up as a preacher's kid centers around our home and the fascinating missionaries who spent time with us. Perhaps this link with missions helped Dad further accept his having to remain at home.

About 1936, Dad noted an increasing weakness in his legs. Doctors diagnosed it as Muscular Dystrophy and gave him two years to be active or even live. Realizing there is no treatment for this disease and that it would simply progress, the family moved to Southern California in 1944. Both Dad and Mom taught at the college and graduate levels and led Sunday School and Bible classes. Dad preached in many churches.

As his daughter, I never heard a word of self-pity from him. He moved in and out of his wheelchair by himself from 1955 on and would stand at the kitchen sink washing dishes because he could keep his balance

by leaning on the counter. When he could no longer stand, he taught and preached sitting down and never made a show of this. He married my husband Richard and me from his wheelchair.

When pushed to comment on his condition, his response was: "This is the best thing God could give me." Two hymns which Dad would sing as solos express his acceptance of God's plan: "It is Well With My Soul" and "Under His Wings."

His teaching positions included Westmont College (1945-49) and Los Angeles Baptist College and Seminary which became Northwest Baptist Seminary in Tacoma, Washington. Dad received an honorary D.D. from the Seminary in recognition of his teaching ministry.

Two attempts to retire were unsuccessful, and he returned each time to teach another year.

Finally, in 1982, he and Mom moved to Tucson, Arizona, to be near Paul and family and later to Gainesville, Florida, before needing nursing home care. In July 1985, a place opened up in Pennsylvania at the Quarryville Presbyterian Home. Just two months later, Dad had a cerebral hemorrhage and died quietly on September 5, 1985. His memorial service, taken by three former students, was a most fitting tribute to his life and ministry.

Anyone who knew "Dr. King," my father, became aware of his constant study of Scripture in its original languages. He could communicate gems of knowledge,

and he loved to share his insights about the person of Christ to any listener. In many ways, he "lived in the heavenlies."

Early in his life, he emphasized the grace of God as needing to be operative in a believer's life.

In his own weakness, he drew on God's strength. God's grace was sufficient for him. His own intimacy with Jesus Christ was not something he talked about; but, being with him, one sensed the truth of his oneness with Christ and the depth of relationship he enjoyed with his Lord. None of us can forget the booming voice and closing phrase of all his prayers, "in the peerless name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

He transferred to two generations of faithful men the absolute authority of Scripture in a person's life and the reality, the fulfillment of life in Christ. And those faithful men today are making disciples among all nations, reached and unreached. If Dad had had the physical strength, he could have toured the world in the company of his students and seen what God was doing in each place. From that standpoint, his ministry continues on today.

It would be Dad's prayer that these studies in Leviticus and Hebrews would be a catalyst in your life and mine to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ more completely.

--Ruth King Dix

## Editor's Note

To those in Marchant King's immediate circle—as guests in his home, students in his classes, listeners when he preached—he seemed the living portrait of the verse, “strength made perfect in weakness.”

Struck by muscular dystrophy in the mid-stride of young manhood, he spent the rest of his long life coping with the grip of that disease as it strangled his body and ultimately led to the cerebral hemorrhage that took his life.

Raised in California, he attended Occidental College and then chose Princeton Seminary in New Jersey for graduate study under Professors Robert Dick Wilson and Gresham Machen, giants in theology.

While holding his first pastorate in Newburg, NY, his body succumbed to the disease. Anticipating an uncertain future, his wife Grace earned a doctor of philosophy degree in English at New York University. The family, now including daughter Ruth and son Paul along with Grace's father George Hamilton, moved to California, attracted by the milder climate and teaching positions offered them.

Marchant taught at Culter Academy in Los Angeles and his wife taught English and psychology at nearby Westmont College. Later, when the school moved to Santa Barbara, Marchant joined the Westmont faculty teaching Bible.

The family moved to Glendale, CA, when Grace became head of the English department at Glendale College and Marchant joined the faculty of the Los Angeles Baptist Seminary. They moved to Federal Way, WA, when the seminary changed its name and moved to Tacoma.

In retirement they moved to Tucson, AZ, to be near their son, then to Keystone Heights, FL and ultimately to Hershey, PA and a nursing home.

Believed the longest survivor of muscular dystrophy, Marchant, enduring the crablike gait that made walking so difficult, resisted a wheel chair for many years.

When I was a young teen in his classes, I held him in such high esteem that had someone said the King James version was a collaboration I would have believed it.

The day he performed the marriage ceremony for my bride and me, he fell and smashed his eyeglasses. He refused the offer of Novocain to deaden the pain as his physician sewed the cuts on his face. He didn't want his deadened expression to take attention away from the bride.

When I became editor of “Moody Monthly” magazine, I asked him to write these studies in Leviticus and Hebrews. They were subsequently published. He poured his heart and strength into these lessons. They show his mastery of the Scriptures and deep appreciation of the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a great man of God he was—what patience under pressure in the extremes his body brought him, what an alert mind balanced by a sensitive heart, what concern that his students mature in their knowledge of Christ and their understanding of His deep things. He stood for truth and personal righteousness with grace. He exalted the Lord Christ.

Truly, in him we found one whose seeming weakness disguised immense strength.

--Prof. Dick Bohrer

# Introduction

**The complex, rapidly-moving events of our times can easily confuse and overwhelm us, driving us to anxiety and despondency.**

But they need not. The Christian has been provided an antidote in the sovereignty of Christ.

His sovereignty shines forth like a beacon light to help us see beyond the confusion around us to the higher, long-range horizon of God's revelation.

Our examination of the details in Leviticus will point us forward to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen in the gospels and explained in the book of Hebrews. May this sweep of Scripture open our eyes and heart to the magnificence of God's plan for the ages as He reveals Himself to us as Savior and Sovereign.

How is He sovereign?

**First, He is sovereign in God the Son.** This and nothing less is the Jesus of the New Testament, the Savior whom we trust. Before the foundation of the world He was one with the Father, equal with Him in power and glory. He shared in the sovereignty of the Godhead just as He did in the other attributes.

He refers to this relationship in His high priestly prayer in John 17, where He speaks of "the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was" (v.5).

The Scriptures explicitly declare that in Him, the second Person of the Trinity, the sovereignty of God was exercised in creation. John 1:3 pro-

claims that "all things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Colossians 1:16 repeats the same truth.

**His fiat brought forth this earth we stand on,** the sun that provides energy we live by, the starry worlds beyond the range of our unaided vision. To this Paul adds, "By Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17KJV). By Him all things hold together in their places, from electrons within an atom to a planet in its orbit.

By His word came life—this thing so inexplicable, so amazing in its delicate adjustments, so quickly destroyed by man's cruelty, so impossible of human origination.

His is the sovereignty by which it all came to be and by which it persists. Yet He is also the very One who loved us even to the depths of Golgotha where He was made sin—a curse—for us. He is the One who loves us today.

**Second, Christ is sovereign as the incarnate God-man.** Because of His love for men condemned in sin, this same Person of the eternal Trinity, God the Son, became incarnate and took our humanity apart from its sin.

Born as a babe in Bethlehem, growing up in subjection to His parents in Nazareth, walking the roads

of Palestine veiled in flesh, He was, nevertheless, the Sovereign of all.

This is precisely the testimony of those who saw Him day after day. The synoptic Gospels cite repeated examples showing Him sovereign over disease, demons, and a storm at sea until his companions cried out, "What manner of man is this!"

The apostle Paul, who met Christ on the Damascus road, says He is "the first-born from the dead," "the first-born of all creation" (Colossians 1:15-18). The word translated "first-born" means primacy in time plus supremacy and sovereignty—as the first-born of the family inherits the sovereign rights belonging to the family.

Paul is saying that Christ is declared by His resurrection to be sovereign over death and life, sovereign of all creation.

**The apostle John, who knew Christ most intimately,** declares this sovereignty most fully. He arranged his Gospel account around seven selected proofs of Christ's sovereignty in every sphere—a structure whose perfection is seen in the ascending order of the examples.

First comes sovereignty over the processes of nature—in the water made wine. Nature uses sunshine and air in the course of a season to turn water into wine. But the Sovereign-of-nature's-processes accomplishes it instantly.

Next He is shown as sovereign over diseases—one of short standing in the healing of the nobleman's son, and one of long standing in the restoration of the man by the pool of Bethesda.

Then He multiplies five rolls and

two fishes to feed a multitude. After that, in making a blind man see, He provides a faculty lacking since birth.

Coming to the climax, the Sovereign calls Lazarus from the grave. Then He raises Himself from death, never again to come under its power.

Taking a still different view, we see Him as sovereign of sin and Satan. Sin had no power over Him; Satan had no claim and no hold upon Him. This is the Sovereign who enters and abides in the heart of every one who truly receives Him as Savior and Lord.

**Third, Christ is sovereign in His death.** Christ's sovereignty shines out most brilliantly in the cross. It is not just that He set His face deliberately to go to Jerusalem where He knew death awaited Him. He is sovereign in the very act of dying.

He could say, "No man has taken it (My life) from Me ... I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again (John 10:18). His cry, "It is finished," was not a cry of final, exhausted relief but the shout of a Victor who had accomplished His goal. This cry was followed by the sovereign act (obscured by our poor translation) of dismissing His spirit. He was sovereign in the very action of death as well as resurrection.

Someone might ask, "Was He not yielding to something in dying?" The answer goes to the very core of Christianity.

**He was not yielding to anything outside Himself.** The necessity of the cross lay within the confines of His own being and nature as God. God is both righteous and lov-

ing; He must both punish sin and provide salvation for the objects of His love. Christ did exactly this in His death on the cross, so there was a mighty gain for His sovereignty.

Paul discloses this in Philippians 2: “God highly exalted Him” (v. 9) because “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (v. 8).

In Revelation we see that the only One worthy to take the scroll—that title-deed to the universe—is the “Lamb ... slain” (Revelation 5:6). He is proclaimed sovereign not only because He sacrificed Himself but even more because His sovereignty by this sacrifice was released from the restraining demands of His justice, a justice that insisted on the punishment of sin.

With sin’s punishment executed on the cross, Christ’s sovereignty is full and unrestricted, free to act in absolute grace to any and all.

**Fourth, we need to consider the status of Christ’s sovereignty in the world.** Today it is not as manifest as it will be the day of His coming, when He will be sovereign without a shadow of question. When men cry to the rocks to fall on them and hide them, they will not doubt His sovereignty nor have any thought of resistance.

Revelation 19 says He will have many crowns on His head when He comes to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Anti-Christ will be destroyed by the very “brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8KJV). His mere word will crush the armies of the nations, for His “Depart from Me” will send men to everlasting fire.

**He will be sovereign over nature,** since by His power the earth will be cleared of the curse due to sin. He will be sovereign over men, ruling with “a rod of iron” and causing righteousness and equity to reign in the earth.

But the highest of all indications of sovereignty will be His right to bestow on others the sovereignty which is His own. The Word of God declares that Christ will not only reign over the earth but that He will cause His saved ones to reign with Him. And so the believer will share the sovereignty of Christ by virtue of the will of the Sovereign.

**All of this will take place in the future.** But the sovereignty of Christ is just as real today as it will be then. It simply is not manifest today because it is not exercised immediately. Instead, Christ is acting in the world “mediately,” that is, almost entirely through second causes.

This is the only way He could exercise His sovereignty and at the same time fulfill His present purpose. How else could He test men to see who really believes and loves Him?

He wants today to gather for himself a people (His bride) who will really trust and love Him, not a mass forced into submission by His display of omnipotent power. Billions of stars follow His will perfectly but not by their own voluntary choice.

However hidden it may be, Christ’s sovereignty among men is nevertheless real today. We can see it as we take the long-range view through the books of Leviticus and Hebrews.

**We will see a sovereign Hand at the helm** in the exact, minute ful-



fillment of prophecies given hundreds of years before the events.

The Hebrew people sojourned in Egypt for a previously specified number of years. Then, as prophesied, they went into the Promised Land and later into the predicted seventy years of Babylonian captivity.

We've witnessed the prophesied coming of Messiah, Jerusalem's siege and destruction in 70 A.D., the Jews' world-wide dispersion but amazing preservation and now their return to Palestine and national revival. These demonstrate a sovereignty that defies contradiction.

The same may be said of prophecies regarding the course of the church and the world's political and social life.

Surely we see the sovereignty of Christ in the miracle of transformed lives—when men and women turn from cynical doubt or cold self-righteousness to simple, loving trust in the Lord Jesus as their Savior. That turn from hard selfishness and lives of sin to joyous self-sacrifice and lives of real purity is the standing miracle of our time.

**He would exercise this same sovereignty** in the lives of Christians constantly to make "all things work together for good," that they might be conformed to the image of the Son of God. He would have His own recog-

nize His purpose in all that concerns them.

This has always been the intent of God as He has dealt with man from creation onward. As we trace His plan through the shadows of Leviticus and into the substance of Hebrews, we will see how beautifully the glory of the LORD has shone for us in levitical detail and gospel story. May our hearts respond in wonder and in worship.

But how often, though, we fail—like Israel—to discern His hand and cause Him to work indirectly in order to fulfill His purpose. We don't listen until laid low by illness. We won't wait for Him until we have met some disastrous defeat.

**Perhaps our highest privilege as Christians** is to let His sovereignty in our lives be immediate, to allow him to rule directly in every particular, to look to Him in every circumstance.

Then we shall see His sovereignty exercised in putting down sin in our lives and in subduing evil before us.

This is the only way to count for Christ, to gain satisfaction and joy in our lives, to bring joy to the heart of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

May He whose right it is to reign wield the scepter in our hearts and lives.



# Let's Prepare to Dine with Him on Leviticus

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

**G**od has spread a lavish panoply of pictures through the Old Testament as a preface to prepare the world for His coming to earth to redeem fallen man at Calvary.

From early chapters in Genesis where He told Adam that the soul that sins would surely die, we learn that God has carried through on His warning. The sinner dies.

But God, in grace, has revealed His remedy that the death of a substitute can atone for sin. In the Books of Moses He defines which substitutes were suitable and why.

Out of the shadows of that Old Testament sacrificial system has come the substance of His arrival on earth as the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

**The ultimate plan?** He Himself would become the sacrifice. He would be the One "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

To grasp the significance, the magnificence of the plan of redemption, we begin our study in Exodus because Leviticus so closely connects to Exodus that Leviticus 1:1 literally begins with the word "and" in the King James Version. We must become familiar with the former book if we are to understand and appreciate the latter.

**Exodus presents** three supremely important acts of God: Israel's deliverance from the death of its firstborn and from Egyptian bondage, the nation's becoming God's covenant people at Mount Sinai and the plan and building of the tabernacle.

The first act stands as the basis of Old Testament redemption in which Israel is sheltered from judgment by the sprinkled blood of the Passover lamb. God delivers the nation from Egyptian slavery as proof of His might and loving concern. We will deal with this in more detail in Leviticus 23.

The second act signifies God's bringing the nation into covenant relationship with Himself. The people have reached Mount Sinai, and God manifests His presence by awesome signs. Moses ascends the mountain to receive the Lord's promise for Israel. The One who delivered them from bondage in Egypt will claim these people as His special treasure, a kingdom of priests.

**But this promise is conditional:** "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant ..." (Exo-

dus 19:5). God has established His law, centered in the Ten Commandments, looking to man for righteous performance.

The Israelites, however, show no hesitancy. They confidently assert, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 19:8). God then calls for complete cleansing; and any man or beast that touches the mountain, except Moses and Aaron, will die.

**On the third day**, with fearful signs of thunder, lightning and smoke, the "Ten Words" are given. And for a moment, Israel actually "feared the Lord." But the people were afraid to hear God's voice and even begged Moses to speak rather than God. Law had not brought them nearer to God.

Now there follows a wide range of laws regulating Israel's life, worship and responsibility toward others (Exodus 20:22-26; 22:21-23). When Moses presented these to the people, they responded as confidently as before: "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 24:3). So Moses wrote down what God had given him for Israel. This became known as the Book of the Covenant.

The next morning, Moses built an altar at the base of the mountain. He erected pillars for each of the 12 tribes to share in honoring God. Both burnt and peace offerings were sacrificed, and the blood was collected. Half was sprinkled on the altar to acknowledge God's sovereignty over life. When Moses read the Book of the Covenant again, the people responded once more, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." This time they added, "And we will be

obedient" (Exodus 24:7).

**Next we reach a high point.** Moses takes the remaining blood and sprinkles it over the people. "Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words," he says (Exodus 24:8). Israel has now entered a covenant relationship with Jehovah.

But God's blessings are conditional, based on man's obedience. This sacrificial blood is only of token value, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). How grandly different is the new covenant into which Christ has brought us, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20).

The second act concludes with Moses, Aaron, his older sons and 70 elders catching a glimpse of God in His brilliant glory. They ate and drank in a privileged though distant fellowship. Moses went to the top of the mountain, and on the seventh day he entered the very presence of God in the middle of the cloud. He completed 40 days on the mount, receiving the tablets of law and plans for the tabernacle.

**The third great act of God** concerned the plan and building of the tabernacle. As was fitting for God's covenant people, they constructed the tabernacle in the center of the camp. Day or night, the Israelites could see the pillar of cloud or fire above it, recognize God's presence and obey His command to break camp the moment the cloud lifted.

God gave specific instructions for the tabernacle's construction. Each

detail held significance. Approaching the tabernacle, an Israelite would first encounter white linen hangings on movable pillars around a court, 75 feet across by 150 feet.

Throughout Scripture, fine linen symbolizes righteousness. Here, the wall protecting God's dwelling emphasized His standard of perfect righteousness. Suitably, the linen wall stood seven-and-a-half feet high. Before God's standard of righteousness, all come short; anyone who wanted to know God must first find a door.

**The entrance was 30 feet wide.**

Its hanging screen could be readily identified by its colored embroidery: blue, purple and red. The blue suggested heavenly origin and the purple, royalty. "Adam," the Hebrew word for "red," also meant "man" and was closely related to the word for "blood." This door, therefore, combined heavenly origin, humanity associated with shedding of blood as well as ultimate rule and authority.

Within the court, the most prominent item was the brazen altar, a seven-and-a-half foot square standing four-and-a-half feet high. Made of acacia wood overlaid with brass or bronze, it was open at the bottom and top. Halfway down was a network of bronze grating for firewood and the sacrifice.

**The metal used here implied judgment,** as did the brass pillars supporting the linen hangings. (Judgment upholds the standard of righteousness.) This is in accord with Christ's reference to the brazen serpent as a type of His own death on the cross (Numbers 21:9; John 3:14). He was to be lifted up in judgment for

sin. The altar's central position shows the primacy of atoning sacrifice.

Another court furnishing was the brazen laver, a huge bowl placed between the altar and the entrance of the holy place (Exodus 30:18-21). It held water so the priests could wash their hands and feet before going into the holy place or ministering at the altar. This washing was not optional but "on pain of death." God's ministers had to be clean.

Again, the brass points to judgment—in this case, self-judgment or self-evaluation. Appropriately, women donated their brass mirrors to be melted for this purpose.

**The tabernacle proper** was a tent, 15 feet by 45 feet, set toward the rear of the court. Its side and back walls began with acacia boards standing on end. Each had two projections, or "tenons," on the bottom. These fit into silver sockets that held the boards in place and formed a portable foundation.

Gold rings attached to each board allowed five bars to slide through and provide additional support. The two back corners had special boards with large rings to hold them together.

Everything was covered with gold. This presents a grand picture of Christ, who tabernacled among us (John 1:14). He was the true temple of God during His years on earth. His spotless humanity is portrayed by the acacia, or "incorruptible wood," as the Septuagint puts it. The gold characterized His deity.

It is significant, too, that both wood and gold continue unmingled and unchanged, true wood and true

gold, yet one unit. The table, altar of incense and ark of the covenant repeat this message. Each item foreshadows Christ.

**The tent itself** had four complete coverings. The first was of fine linen embroidered with cherubim in blue, purple and scarlet. It spanned the tabernacle, covering the outside walls down to 18 inches above the ground. These cherub figures revealed the holiness of God's dwelling; the blue, purple and scarlet pointed to the One from heaven, the true King, incarnate and sacrificed. Christ, who maintained God's righteousness, became the just and the justifier of all who have faith in Him (Romans 3:26).

**The second covering**, larger than the first, reached to the ground. Woven from goat hair, it provided insulation against desert heat and occasional winter cold. Spiritually, this sturdy material denoted separation from the world, essential for God's people in any age.

Above this was a covering of ram's skin dyed red, giving the strength of leather. A ram was prominent in consecration (Leviticus 8:18-36); the reddening process accentuated the need for a sacrifice. Such consecration would add strength to God's temple today.

The outer covering, also of skins, was probably derived from the sea cow whose thick hide was used for shoes (Exodus 26:14; Ezekiel 16:10 NIV). Such skins provided shelter from rain and sandstorms, but not much beauty. The beauty of the tabernacle was on the inside. The prophet Isaiah mentioned such external plainness in the One who had

"no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Isaiah 53:2).

**At the east end** of the tabernacle hung a screen similar to the one at the court entrance. Again this represented Christ, the door into God's presence and favor. This screen was supported by five acacia wood pillars overlaid with gold; its sockets were of brass, picturing both sin's judgment in the cross and self-judgment as foundational to worship and acceptable service.

The holy place, where any ceremonially clean priest with a service to perform could come, was the larger of the two sacred rooms. Inside on the right stood the table of showbread bearing the "bread of the Presence," and on the left, a golden lampstand. Close to the great veil dividing the tabernacle, barring the way into the holy of holies, was the altar of incense.

**The table of showbread**, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, was 36 inches long, 18 inches wide and 27 inches high. A gold border or "crown" surrounded its edge to hold the bread in place. A rim with its own gold border also encompassed the table.

But the center of attention was the showbread—the "bread of the Presence," which was held continuously before God. Here one sees similarities to Christ Jesus, the Bread of Life (John 6:32-58), who was bruised and put through the fire as the Father willed.

The lampstand, made of pure gold, weighed about 75 pounds. Its central shaft had three branches on

each side, supporting lamps with an almond-shaped design that burned pure olive oil. The spiritual significance is strong. Seven lamps provided perfect light for the outer sanctuary. Throughout Scripture, oil symbolized the Holy Spirit; it is His power that enables God's light to shine. Gold, again, represented the full deity of Him who declared Himself "the light of the world." As full deity, Christ could provide a revelation or light that was trustworthy. And the almond decorations pointed to the ultimate proof for Christ's claims—the resurrection. The Hebrew word for "almond" means "awakener," that is, the one showing new life early in spring.

**The last furnishing** in the holy place was the altar of incense with its portable alternative—the gold censor. This acacia altar overlaid with gold was 18 inches square and 36 inches high. God commanded the Israelites to place it near the great veil, opposite the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. He wanted it as close to the ark (and His revealed presence) as possible but still available to common priests.

Gold united with acacia wood again pictures the God-Man lifting believers' prayers and worship to the Father. Our utterances are united with the perfect fragrance of Christ's own character (Revelation 8:3, 4).

The great veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies was another fine linen hanging embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet cherubim, held up by four acacia wood and gold pillars.

**In the synoptic Gospels**, we read of the literal tearing of this veil

when Christ died (Matthew 27:51). John, who consistently described our Lord's body as the true temple of God on earth, focused on His side, rent by the Roman spear. The writer of Hebrews also equated the tabernacle veil with Christ's flesh (10:20).

During Jesus' earthly life, His body concealed the glorious presence of God. Likewise, His spotless character and teaching reflected God's righteous standard, as the cherubim in the veil signified the holiness of God's dwelling place. When Christ, our infinite sacrifice, died, the veil split from the top down. Now the way into the true holy of holies is open, and we can come boldly before God's throne (Hebrews 4:16).

The sole furnishing in the tabernacle's Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant, a modest-sized chest made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. A gold molding or crown, put around the upper edge, held the magnificent cover in place.

Here we find a climactic type of Christ—the gold of deity and wood of humanity, both unchanged but forming one ark, one Person.

Inside the ark, Moses placed the tablets of the law which Israel had already flagrantly broken. This was the safest, most sacred place for them. And in Jesus Christ alone, God's law was kept. Psalm 40:8 foreshadows Messiah's declaration, "Thy law is within my heart." He alone qualified as the spotless lamb.

**The ark's cover**, commonly called the "mercy seat" or "atonement cover" (NIV) was solid gold, reserved wholly for God as a seat of supreme honor. Two cherub figures—one on each end—faced inward with wings

spread high, arching over the mercy seat.

Here was potentially the most awful judgment seat imaginable. Emblems of God's holiness and executioners of His absolute righteousness stared down at an ark that contained the written law, the pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded—memorials of man's failure, discontent, rebellion and witnesses of man's death-deserving sin.

**But it was not a judgment seat.**

It was a mercy seat, a throne of

grace. Atoning blood had been sprinkled there, satisfying God's righteous demands. God had promised, "There I will meet with thee and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Exodus 25:22 KJV). Jesus Christ, our final Atonement, has enabled us also to enter the presence of the Almighty.

The gospel of Christ was indelibly portrayed in Exodus. Here we find significant background for Leviticus.

### Questions for Leviticus 1

1. The Hebrew word translated "offering" in verse 2 is "qorban," meaning "a gift dedicated to God." It is also used by Christ in Mark 7:11. From this definition, what should have been the motivation for bringing such an offering?
2. What difference did it make that the offering had to be male (in contrast, for example, to the peace offering mentioned in 3:1)?
3. An offering must be "without defect" (1:3). Where do you find an earlier reference to a prominent "unblemished" offering? How does this relate to Christ?
4. Why was an offerer instructed to lay his hands on the head of his sacrifice?
5. If the offering cited in verse 4 was not for any particular sin, why the phrase: "to make atonement on his behalf"?
6. Why did God demand that the blood be drained from the sacrifice and sprinkled around the brazen altar?
7. What was done with the hide of the bullock (see chapter 7)? Suggest reasons for skinning it.
8. Note Leviticus 3:16; what did the fat or "suet" signify?
9. What in the text assures the poor that offering a pigeon is acceptable to God?
10. Why was the burnt offering a sweet aroma to God?



# The Burnt Offering: A Sweet Aroma to God

Leviticus 1

**Without the death of Christ, the levitical offerings lose definition and significance. Old Testament sacrifices introduce the coming Messiah and His redemptive work.**

Because Hebrew practice designated a manuscript by its initial word, the third book of Moses was originally known by the Hebrew word meaning “and He called.” “Leviticus,” the name given by the translators of the Greek Septuagint, is suitable because the book outlines religious order for Israel as God’s covenant people. That order was largely directed by the levitical priests.

Leviticus gave regulations for every aspect of Israel’s life, food, hygiene and relationships. All of life was to be lived “before Jehovah.” At the same time, prophetic sections portrayed God’s righteousness and grace, later fulfilled through Christ’s redemptive work. These prophetic pictures can have a tremendous spiritual impact on a Christian.

**The first seven chapters** cover five regular offerings and their corresponding laws. It is significant that these offerings immediately precede the inauguration of the priests who would offer them because sinful man cannot reach God apart from an atoning sacrifice.

**Although the five offerings** emphasized a token acceptance by God, their real, eternal value was in the

death of Christ. These sacrifices depended on the cross for ultimate meaning and foreshadowed the chief aspects of Christ’s atonement.

The presentation doesn’t begin with atonement for man’s specific sins and failures, but with an offering wholly for God’s honor, rising to Him as a sweet savor or pleasing aroma. The burnt offering pictured Christ, who gave Himself wholly to God in obedience “to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).

While the King James translation—“of his own voluntary will” (Leviticus 1:3)—is not literal (God had commanded it), that may well be implied. The Hebrew does suggest it was a voluntary offering. The word “offering” itself connotes a gift, given out of devotion to God in worship, possibly celebrating restoration or some other special blessing.

**Though unattainable** in an animal sacrifice, perfect voluntariness was demonstrated in Christ. “No one has taken [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative,” Jesus said. “I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:18).

Christ, of course, was both offerer and sacrifice.

From Noah's day, cattle, sheep and goats were recognized as ceremonially clean (Genesis 7:2). Turtle-doves and young pigeons were added when God condescended to assure Abram of His promise (Genesis 15:9).

**Larger animals had to be male,** but not because that was more valuable or more acceptable to God. In the peace offering, for example, male or female were equally acceptable (Leviticus 3:1, 6).

The male represented active strength in accord with the voluntary nature of the offering. Sin did not force that sacrifice to suffer. Rather, the giver would be actively and totally devoting himself to God. This parallels Christ's almost aggressive determination to go to Jerusalem, which ultimately meant the cross (Luke 9:51; 12:50).

It was probably understood from early times that these offerings needed to be without defect. God made this requirement explicit when He detailed the Passover instructions. At least part of the reason for keeping the Passover lamb from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> day was to ensure it was spotless.

**The relation to Christ is obvious:** To bear man's sin, He Himself must be without sin. And if He was to bring to God on our behalf the glory and honor of infinite obedience, He needed to be without defect.

An Israelite would bring his sacrifice to a point in front of the tabernacle doorway, as near the manifest presence of God as he could properly come (Leviticus 1:3, 4). For this reason, some have called it the "ap-

proach offering."

The next step in the ritual shows how God's acceptance was secured. Despite its spiritual importance, we often overlook this. The offender was to lay his hand on the sacrifice's head, symbolizing an identification with his offering. They became one before God; what the sacrifice would do was credited to the offerer. If bearing sin was prominent, then specific sin might be confessed at that time. Such identification made it proper to transfer a man's sin onto his sacrifice.

**In the same way,** saving faith unites us to Christ. What He has done we also have accomplished in and with Him (Romans 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:11-13; 3:1-4).

The latter part of verse four, "that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf," explains that the sacrifice would be accepted for the offerer's benefit. Though specific sin was not the reason for this offering, the offerer was still a sinner and the slain sacrifice did "make atonement on his behalf." Expiation preceded devotion.

Everything was now ready for slaying the young bullock. The offerer had acknowledged the Lord's awesome majesty and holiness. Life itself, God's great gift, belonged initially to Him. Here, the offerer would give it back to God in voluntary sacrifice.

The priests carefully collected the blood and lifted it up in its basin toward God's manifest presence in the holy of holies. Blood symbolized life; and, because life belonged to God, so did the blood. The priests would then

sprinkle it around the altar or “against the altar on all sides” as the New International Version puts it. The atoning blood made the altar ceremonially clean, fit to receive the sacrifice.

**Next, the priests skinned** the bullock, perhaps to preserve the “pleasing aroma” from mixing with that of burning hair and hide. But more important, the perfect body would now be fully exposed to the altar’s flame.

The four parts mentioned are significant. While other portions of certain offerings may have been eaten by the priests or by the offerer and his family, the inward fat, like the blood, was reserved for God. Just as the blood carried life, so the fat suggested inward energy because it flamed up quickly in the fire. Representing inward spiritual energy, it rose swiftly to God. Such devotion can only be fully seen in Christ and fully appreciated by the Father.

**The head signified intellect;** the inward organs, the seat of emotions for ancient Hebrews; and legs, their spiritual walk. In Christ, who was our whole burnt offering, these areas were infinitely perfect and offered to God on our behalf.

After washing the entrails and legs (to maintain the picture of purity), the priest would arrange them with the other parts to show that the whole sacrifice was on the altar. It would then be offered up in smoke as “a soothing aroma to the Lord.” The King James Version translates it “sweet savor” (verse 9), while the New International calls it “an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

**The altar fire lifted** a voluntary offering to God in atonement, but its significance went deeper. The total offering, from head to innermost energy and emotion, was lifted as a sweet savor of complete devotion and honor. When God accepted the sacrifice, He would restore the offerer to a relationship of favor with Himself.

Christians throughout the centuries have treasured the truth that Old Testament sacrifices foreshadowed the cross. Isaiah said, “Thou shalt make His (Messiah’s) soul an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10 KJV). The New Testament is full of similar references—from John the Baptist’s “Behold the Lamb of God” to Revelation’s “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Although we have noted some parallels, there are also significant differences.

**In the levitical sacrifice,** death came first, followed by the flaying, the laying out of each part and the fire. In Christ’s sacrifice, however, the fire of infinite suffering precipitated the sacrificial death.

We can see anticipatory fire in Gethsemane and the trials before both Caiaphas and Pilate. But the mockery, scourging and crown of thorns introduced the actual fire. Ironically, the shameful exposure of Christ’s total nakedness before a jeering crowd only revealed His perfection. Peter later commented, “While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats” (1 Peter 2:23).

The unspeakable physical suffering of crucifixion emphasized Christ’s unfailing grace. “Father, forgive,” He said after the nails were driven in, “for they do not know what they are

doing” (Luke 23:34).

**By far the most intense flame was Christ’s spiritual suffering.** The Lord Most Holy was made sin for us. The Son, who was ever one with the Father and Spirit, suddenly was forsaken. Yet in absolute loyalty and obedience, Christ gave Himself to that fire, offering up His whole being in devotion. When an Old Testament offerer would identify with his sacrifice by laying his hands on it, he was accepted before God. So we today, united by faith with our Sacrifice, are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6 KJV) or “taken in gracious favor.” Even more than having our sins forgiven, we stand in Christ’s righteousness before God, in all the aroma of the infinite Burnt Offering. This is what Jeremiah meant when he called Messiah “the Lord our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6).

**Some insist** that God considers us righteous because Christ kept the law for us. But the apostle Paul writes, “As through *one transgression* [the Fall] there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through *one act of righteousness* [the cross] there resulted justification of life to all men” (Romans 5:18).

Equally conclusive is his statement in Romans 3:21, “Now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested.” Our righteous standing is not through the law, but the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The Lord Jesus delivered pure grace to us and absolute obedience to the Father. As our whole burnt offering, He brought infinite honor to God on our behalf.

You will notice three distinct grades of burnt offering in Leviticus

1. We have already examined the highest, the young bullock. The second was a male sheep or goat, sacrificed in the same manner as the bullock. (Leviticus 7:8 implies the sheep or goat was similarly skinned.) The third was a bird, either a turtledove or pigeon. All were considered ceremonially clean. The only distinction, from a natural viewpoint, was economic. A bullock was costly, while even the poorest Israelite could obtain a turtledove.

**Some scholars** have suggested the spiritual significance of these sacrifices. The bullock is said to represent patient strength; the lamb, gentle self-surrender; the goat, bearing others’ sins; the birds, mourning and association with the poor. All these qualities are found in our perfect burnt offering, Jesus Christ.

**A striking challenge** confronts us as we picture three grades of appreciation for Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. With a bullock-size appreciation, we should echo Paul’s conviction: “May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).

There is also a mid-size appreciation, good but still challenged by the best. Significantly, two classes in Israel had to bring at least a sheep or goat: priests and princes. God’s standard of devotion for leaders in the church should hardly be lower.

The spiritually poor or babes with only pigeon-size appreciation are still accepted by God. For the Christian in this condition, there is not only encouragement but also abundant provision for bullock-quality growth.

While the order for offering sheep

or goats was virtually identical with that of the bullock, the ritual for a bird was different. Leviticus does not mention laying hands on bird, sheep or goat sacrifices. This may simply be implied or it could suggest that entering into oneness with the sacrifice demands a bullock-size appreciation. As Christians, we must recognize and embrace the Lord's "obedience unto death."

For a bird offering, the priest did all the preparation and actual sacrificing. The offerer's inability to enter actively into the service may result from a small appreciation of the sacrifice.

**Leviticus emphasizes cleanliness** of the pigeon or turtledove. No other bird offering required removing the crop as well as the feathers. The head was wrung off and its blood drained on the side of the altar. Next the priest would tear, not sever, the wings so the fire could reach the en-

tire body. Though small, the bird would become a sweet savor to God; and the offerer would be accepted before the Lord.

Leviticus chapter 6 distinguishes these burnt sacrifices as continual offerings, symbolizing Israel's constant devotion to Jehovah. The priest would put on a special linen garment for this service. Each day, according to levitical law, he would offer a new sacrifice and discard yesterday's ashes. These offerings were not to be removed from the altar nor was the fire ever allowed to go out.

Christ's acceptability as our whole burnt offering guarantees our security as believers. The most important response to God's mercy is the "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice." Because we have been redeemed by Christ's blood, this is our "spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

## Questions for Leviticus 2

1. What names were given to the offering in chapter 2 in NASB and KJV? Why does the KJV call it a "meat offering" (see John 4:32)?
2. Why is fine flour considered a symbol of Christ's character, revealed in His earthly life and ministry?
3. What does oil symbolize in Scripture?
4. Why was a handful from the offering called the "memorial portion?"
5. Why was all the frankincense burned with this portion?
6. Can you name the three times God, in a voice from heaven, acknowledged that Christ had fulfilled this offering?
7. Why was the remainder of the offering, eaten by the priests, considered "most holy?"
8. Why were leaven and honey excluded from regular levitical offerings?
9. What was the significance of a "covenant of salt" (verse 13)?

10. Why isn't atonement mentioned in this chapter? What does this imply about preaching only about Christ's example without stressing the cross?

# The Grain and First Fruits

Leviticus 2

**When Leviticus 17:11 (KJV) declares, “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul,” why should a bloodless sacrifice have so prominent a place?**

The second regular levitical offering is quite different from the others. Rather than a slain animal, here is fine flour, olive oil, salt and frankincense. The King James Version calls it the “meat” offering. In old-English, this meant “food” (see John 4:32). More recent versions use “meal” or “grain.”

The offering was never intended to accomplish atonement; the words “alone” and “atonement” are not found in the chapter. Numbers 15:2-10 shows the meal offering usually accompanied a slain sacrifice with its atoning work. The whole burnt offering, as the highest sacrifice, is wholly for God; it is the primary sweet savor. Also identified as a sweet savor, the meal offering appropriately follows.

**Manna is not mentioned.** A temporary provision, manna had its own message: God provided “bread from heaven” as needed in the wilderness. Although unbelief kept the Israelites wandering 40 years, the Lord provided the necessary manna.

When they reached Kadesh-Barnea, the place of decision, God commanded the people to go into the land. Leviticus details standard procedure for life there. The land’s “milk

and honey” would include plentiful grain harvests for food and offerings.

**In this offering, fine flour** was the primary ingredient. Beyond raising or buying the grain, it had to be pounded or ground between millstones until it was completely even. Such fineness represented a life of perfectly even-textured obedience and honor to God.

When offered with a sincere heart according to the Lord’s instructions, this sacrifice was accepted as a sweet savor, honoring God and encouraging the offerer. But it also foreshadowed an important aspect of Christ’s work. His was a perfectly even-textured life of obedience and honor to God the Father. Christ demonstrated the excellence of His character in His life and ministry, which depicted the true Meal Offering.

Fine flour typifies the perfect fineness of the God-Man who could say, “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him (the Father)” (John 8:29). The true aroma, the infinite sweet savor, arose to God through the fire of Christ’s suffering during His earthly life which climaxed at the cross.

**Some olive oil** was always added to the fine flour. It enabled cakes or wafers to be formed, and it contributed richness and flavor.

One of the Bible's best-recognized symbols, oil pictured the person and work of the Holy Spirit. There could be no acceptable meal offering, no sweet savor rising to God, without the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

From the virgin birth to Christ's death and resurrection, the eternal Spirit accomplished His work (Hebrews 9:14). We, as well, must bring our "spiritual meal offerings" of worship and thanksgiving in full dependence on the Holy Spirit.

**The other required ingredient was salt**, an almost universal seasoning (see Job 6:6). In early times, it was also used as a preservative. Both qualities were significant in the offering, just as they were for Christ's disciples, whom He declared "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

If believers maintain a right spiritual condition, their presence and witness will retard moral and spiritual decay. By gracious but pungent contributions, our seasoning can lift conversation from the empty and tasteless. "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt," Paul directed (Colossians 4:6). The true Meal Offering never lacked salt.

Leviticus 2:13 added a new and striking aspect to the salt in this offering, calling it "the salt of the covenant of your God." Such a covenant did not change. In Numbers 18:19, certain offerings allotted to Aaron and his sons were declared "perpetual ... an everlasting covenant of salt

before the Lord." Again in 2 Chronicles 13:5, "the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt."

**Partaking together of salt** established an unbreakable bond of friendship and protection. This Near Eastern tradition has persisted into recent years.

An intriguing aspect of the salt covenant concerns a phrase in Acts 1:4, translated "gathering them together," or literally "taking salt with them." It implies the risen Christ was establishing a "covenant of salt" with His own. The meal offering not only pictures Christ's life of obedience and honor to God, but also portrays God's accepting the aroma of the sacrifice. He is partaking of the "salt of the covenant" with His people.

Along with the offering, there was to be a designated amount of frankincense. The most prominent kind of incense, it formed part of a special incense that burned on the golden altar morning and evening as a continual sweet savor to God.

Like the incense of Exodus 30 and Revelation 8:3, frankincense signified the fragrance of Christ's innermost character rising to God through suffering and death. This was indeed a sweet savor to the Father.

**Two things were excluded** from the meal offering—leaven and honey. As an Old Testament symbol, leaven always represented evil. God warned Israel not to allow spiritual "leaven" in their lives. He instructed them to set aside the week following Passover for a Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In the New Testament, Christ used "leaven" to refer to evil in the



Pharisees' and Sadducees' teaching (Matthew 16:6-12). The apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians to avoid all "leaven" or moral evil. In a wider reference, he mentioned "the old leaven" and "the leaven of malice and wickedness" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). In Galatians 5:9, Paul likened Galatian legalism to yeast that could "leaven the whole lump of dough."

**Yeast's function** makes it a suitable symbol. It causes the dough to swell and become lighter and more palatable when baked. So it is with departure from God's truth and standards.

Disobedience can give someone a feeling of lightness and freedom to change, a "swelling" of the ego. Sin can be attractive and exhilarating at first; but it ends without Christ, without God, without light or life. There was no leaven in Christ, the true Meal offering.

Because honey symbolized productivity in the Promised Land, it seems strange that it was excluded. Some claim it fermented easily like leaven, but beekeepers deny this. Spiritual symbolism seems the reason for its exclusion.

**Natural, external "sweetness"** is just sentimental, wholly apart from God's grace. At first it can look attractive, but before long the superficiality becomes apparent. It smothers honesty; and the more the "honey" approach succeeds, the less a person feels his need for God. Its real motivation is self-promotion which is not honoring to God. There was none of this "honey" in Christ, and there must be none in our lives as living sacrifices to God.

The prepared meal offering was

brought to the brazen altar. There the priest took a handful of the meal and all the frankincense and burned them as a sacrifice. The handful, called the "memorial," represented the whole offering. The major part being given to the priests as food did not detract from its holiness (Leviticus 2:3). When we priests (1 Peter 2:9) feed on the even-textured obedience of Christ's earthly life, we glorify God as well as gain spiritual nourishment.

The writer of Leviticus mentions three methods of preparing the grain offering (2:4-7). These differed according to the utensils used and the amount of work involved. Listed in descending order, they're like the sacrifices in chapter 1—from bullock to pigeon. In each case, the grain offering underwent heat, picturing the trials and suffering of Christ's earthly life and ministry.

The first type was enclosed in an oven. This pointed to Christ's deep, unseen suffering such as referred to in Hebrews 2:18. The holy Son of God had to be tempted; the spotless One was made sin. Considerable effort was involved in this offering. The ingredients were mixed and formed into thick unleavened cakes or thin wafers, spread with oil and carefully baked. The diligence shown here portrayed a concern for worship.

**The second type** was to be prepared on an open griddle which pictured Christ's open, obvious sufferings. Because this sacrifice involved less concern about forming and timing, it showed less appreciation for its contribution to the sweet savor.

The third type used a common pan into which ingredients could be

easily poured and quickly cooked. It represented minimum preparation. Although acceptable, this grain offering was far from what it could have been.

Verse 12 explains the offering of the first fruits, where a sheaf of first-ripened grain was waved before the Lord on the first day of the week following Passover—the morning Christ arose. God directed the Israelites not to burn it as a sweet savor. Possibly it was too fresh to burn properly, but it also had spiritual significance. The first fruits pictured Christ arisen (1 Corinthians 15:20); they could never go on the same altar that portrayed the cross.

**After the priest waved** the sheaf of grain, he could then offer other grain which was to be beaten out of full heads that had been roasted. Oil, salt and frankincense were added to this crushed grain and presented to the priest. Again, he would take a memorial handful with all the frankincense and burn it on the altar as an “aroma pleasing to the Lord.”

The law concerning this offering emphasized the reverence with which a priest must offer it (Leviticus 6:14-

18). The priests were to eat the remainder in the tabernacle court to teach them that they drew strength from this offering. Because it was holy, anyone who touched it was consecrated to God. To touch Jesus Christ is also a life-changing experience.

**An added note** in the passage gave special instruction for the meal offering during a priest’s consecration (6:19-23). After this offering was stirred and baked on a griddle, half was burned in the morning and half in the evening. Because nothing was to detract from the complete consecration of the priest’s life to God, none of it could be eaten.

The meal offering gives us spiritual insight into Christ’s earthly life of absolute obedience and loyalty. His life honored God infinitely, gave us a perfect example and qualified Him to be our spotless sacrifice.

But the meal offering was not to stand alone; it did not meet the need for atonement for sin. Preaching the example of Christ’s life apart from His atoning sacrifice leaves the seeking soul facing an unrent veil, still outside God’s presence.

### Questions for Leviticus 3 and 7:11-36

1. Check available Bible versions for the phrase “peace offering” in Leviticus 3:1. For example, the New International renders it “fellowship offering.” How does this affect your understanding of the offering?
2. What does the acceptability of either a male or female offering suggest?
3. Review carefully why an offerer laid his hand on the head of his sacrifice.
4. What two parts of the sacrifice were reserved for God alone and why?
5. What does the inner fat of the sacrifice symbolize? (Note that “whole rump” in the KJV is translated “fat tail” in later versions.)

6. Why couldn't a poor man bring a pigeon for a peace offering?
7. The passage implies inviting friends and neighbors to help finish eating an offering the day it was sacrificed (7:15). What did God require of these people?
8. Why was it suitable, when a peace offering represented thanksgiving, to add a grain offering?
9. What startling addition was made to the standard meal or grain offering in this case? Can you suggest why this was done?
10. Besides hygienic reasons, why couldn't someone eat a sacrifice two days after it was offered? Was there a spiritual reason?
11. Note four things given to the priest from the peace offering. Name a spiritual significance for at least three.

# God Provides Divine Friendship

Leviticus 3:1-17 and 7:11-36

**From a human perspective, the peace offering of Leviticus 3:1-17 may be the most attractive. It was the Israelite's opportunity to praise God for who He is and what He has done.**

With this third regular offering, which follows the description of the grain offering, we return to the standard slain sacrifices. The peace offering completes the group referred to as the "sweet savor offerings" because of their pleasing aroma to God. Like the previous offerings, the peace offering is voluntary. A responsive heart would celebrate God's goodness or give thanks for His special blessing.

Although the translation "peace offering" has been used for centuries, interesting alternatives have evolved. The Septuagint called it the "sacrifice of salvation." The Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria evidently thought it celebrated God's saving work.

**More than 2,000 years later,** the New International Version used "fellowship offering," because the original Hebrew definition encompassed "friendship." In the ritual for this offering, God, the priest, the offerer and his family all shared the sacrificial feast.

**The peace offering** recalls characteristics of the first two offerings. The burnt offering had every part consumed on the altar, rising to God alone. The meal offering had a repre-

sentative portion with all the frankincense burned as a sweet savor to God; the rest became the priests' sacred food.

In the peace offering, however, the blood and fat were God's, and the breast and the right shoulder or "thigh" were given to the priest. The rest constituted a feast for the offerer, his family and friends. This is a climactic picture of full communion, impossible without the two previous offerings.

The peace offering portrays the fellowship we have in Christ, our infinite sacrifice. The New Testament specifies: He "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20 NASB). He gives His peace to His own (John 14:27); "He Himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14); and "God ... reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

**Each detail relating** to the peace offering had a message. The animal was to be taken from a man's own herd or flock. A small offering wasn't appropriate because it was to be used for a feast. And spiritually, to enjoy the peace and fellowship Christ would establish on the cross required

more than a small appreciation of His sacrifice.

The animal could be either male or female, in contrast to the whole burnt offering which had to be male. That offering emphasized the strongly active aspect of Jesus' obedience unto death, whereby He honored God. When Christ made peace through His blood, however, the passive element of His suffering became apparent. Equally part of His work to bring reconciliation and fellowship, this aspect can be symbolized in a female.

**Every standard offering** of the Old Testament had to be spotless. The One to whom the peace offering pointed was also without defect. The New Testament testifies of "One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Some will say Jesus could not sympathize with us if He had not experienced sin. This argument is false. Only one who has stood against the storm really knows its power, not one who lets it carry him along.

As the offerer brought his sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle, he made a significant gesture. By laying his hand on the head of the sacrifice, he identified himself before God with that sacrifice—both what it would undergo and what it would accomplish. On this basis, he could obtain peace and fellowship with God.

The apostle John applied this principle to believers today. "We may have confidence in the day of judgment," he wrote, "because as [Christ] is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Our identification with Christ in His infinite work on Calvary is our source of peace and fellowship.

**Now that the offerer** was consciously before the Lord, he would take a knife and slay his sacrifice. There could be no peace apart from satisfying the righteous demands of God's character. The levitical sacrifice had its token value, looking to the infinite satisfaction on the cross. By this, our own peace was made; and our hearts were drawn into loving fellowship with God.

The blood, representing life, belonged to God. It was caught by the priest and offered to Him by sprinkling it on the altar. The blood of the original Passover lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of Israelite houses in Egypt. This sprinkled blood proclaimed to God the death of the sacrificial substitute. And to those for whom it died, peace would come, followed by the fellowship meal.

**The inward fat** of the sacrifice was also completely reserved for God. Representing the animal's stored up energy, it would quickly ignite when placed on the fire as an offering to God, carrying the aroma heavenward. The fat symbolized the strong inner energy of Christ. In the fire of His suffering burned an inward zeal and deep devotion to the Father, His house and His redemptive purpose.

The repeated details about the location of the fat show its importance. Even the concentration of fat at the base of the sheep's tail was not forgotten. The statement in 3:17 underscores this further: "It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood." The fat of the sacrifices portrayed the zeal and devotion that carried Christ to the cross; the blood atoned for the

sin.

Considerable instruction is given in the law of the peace offering, making it the longest of these laws (7:11-36). The inspired writer changed it from its regular third position to the last position in the law of the offerings. Perhaps he felt the longest and most complex law should be placed last. But more likely, he noted the peace offering's close relationship to the priests' consecration, described in chapter 8.

**The point of this law** was that there had to be a part of the offering reserved for God, a part for the priest and something for the offerer, his family and friends. Real communion became possible because of the peace made through that sacrifice. Similarities to the Lord's Supper are obvious. We were reconciled to God, and with Him we share the blessed results of the Sacrifice.

As priests, we have an inalienable right to the breast of our Sacrifice, symbolizing the love of Him who "loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). The shoulder or thigh was also allotted to the priests who actively offered the blood and the fat. The shoulder pictured the strength of the sacrifice; any spiritually active Christian finds himself strengthened in spirit as he remembers his Peace Offering.

The offerer and his family, friends and neighbors feasted on the remainder of the sacrifice which included the choice portions. In the fellowship offering, the poor had their fill without having to pay for even a pigeon.

God desired that every family feast in Israel have the nature of a

peace offering. Could His ideal be lower for believers today?

There are several more important details about the peace offering. When it was given specifically for thanksgiving, two things were to be added. First was the meal offering with its unleavened cakes of fine flour and oil. Thanks should arise not just because Christ died but for His perfect obedience to the Father and dependence on the Holy Spirit during His lifetime.

**The second addition was startling**—leavened bread. Wasn't leaven a symbol of evil forbidden in any sacrifice to the Lord? Yes, the offering that made peace and reconciled man to God represented Christ so there was no leaven in it.

But there was also man's thankful response. All too often the leaven of self-interest will enter into our praise. Even the smallest amount of leaven would spoil an offering for the altar, yet God still values His people's thanksgiving. For this reason, the leavened bread was given to the officiating priest but not put on the altar. Throughout Scripture, we're exhorted to bring our honest praises to Him regardless of how meager.

The restrictions on the time for eating the offering (7:15-18) are related to hygiene, symbolism, personal significance and a guard against selfishness. God was concerned for His people's health. In a hot climate without refrigeration, keeping meat beyond the second day could be dangerous. Symbolically, decay must never be allowed to occur in the representation of the true Peace Offering. What remained after the second day had to be burned.

Further, a time lapse between offering and eating the sacrifice could make the feast lose its significance. Likewise, if our thanksgiving fellowship during the Lord's Supper separates us in mind and heart from its only source—the suffering and death of Christ—communion will decay into dead formality or merely a social gathering.

**When a peace offering** was to express thankfulness, all the meat had to be eaten the day of the sacrifice. Because the offerer could not save any of it for later, he was encouraged to invite his poor but “clean” neighbors to help him.

But if the feast was designed to be smaller and more personal, arising from an intense devotion to the Lord and leading to greater care of the offering, eating could continue the day after the sacrifice. These people were presumed spiritually strong enough not to eat the leftovers thoughtlessly.

Any sacrifice that remained until the third day or became contaminated by unclean contact was to be burned. And if it was eaten the third day, the offerer lost his benefit before the Lord; the one who ate became guilty and needed spiritual renewal. It was more serious if an unclean person ate the peace offering. He was to be cut off from all contact with his people because he had knowingly disregarded the holiness of God (verses 19-21).

**The next six verses** reinforce the command that fat was acceptable for sacrifice, but not to be eaten; it belonged to God. If an animal died or was killed by another animal, however, its fat could be used for other

purposes. And blood, which bore life and so belonged to God, was also never to be eaten. Offenders were to be excluded from fellowship in Israel.

In conclusion, turn to the Gospel accounts of Christ's sacrifice. Matthew and Mark both emphasize the agony of bearing the world's sin and guilt. They cite one cry from the cross found in Psalm 22:1, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” This reflects the sin and trespass offerings.

The Gospel of John highlights the voluntariness of Christ's sacrifice and its completeness (10:18), reflecting the whole burnt offering. The Lord Jesus discharged His highest human responsibility by giving John care of His mother. As the completion of the suffering approached, Jesus cried out, “I thirst,” as prophesied. Finally, He shouted in a loud voice, “It is finished” (19:30).

**In contrast, Luke** emphasizes the reconciliation of the peace offering, selecting three of Christ's statements from the cross:

- He prayed for God's graciousness toward those who drove in the nails. “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do” (23:34).

- Just before the darkness came, Christ told the criminal at His side, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (23:43). Here we see not just full forgiveness, but personal fellowship with the Lord of Glory. It began that very day on the basis of simple faith, not ordinances or works. This is the responsibility of the true Peace Offering.

- His last cry confirmed His triumph. The One who minutes before had cried out in agony, “My God, why

hast Thou forsaken Me?” now calmly Thy hands I commit My spirit”  
 laid down His life with the realization (23:46). In perfect confidence, peace  
 of restored fellowship. “Father, into had been made.

### Questions for Leviticus 4 and 5

1. There's a question whether 5:1-13 belongs to the sin offering or to the trespass offering. To which would you think it belongs?
2. Why does God restrict the offering to unintentional sins?
3. When a priest sinned, why did he have to bring as large and costly a sacrifice as when the whole congregation sinned?
4. How would someone handle the blood of the sin offering differently from the burnt or peace offering? Why?
5. What symbolism do you see in taking the whole bull outside the camp and burning it there?
6. What do you find noteworthy about the “sweet savor” or “pleasing aroma” in 4:31?
7. What does 5:1 refer to (see NIV)? How might this be related to Acts 1:8?
8. What fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) would best counteract the sin in 5:4?
9. What new element does 5:5, 6 bring into God's dealing with sin?
10. What are the differences between the substitute sin offering for the poor (5:11, 12) and the regular meal or grain offering (chapter 2)?



# There's Power in the Blood

Leviticus 4 and 5

**The final Levitical offerings lack a buoyant, joyful spirit. Sin offends God and condemns the sinner to death. Graciously, God provides a substitute.**

The last two regular offerings (Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30) are distinct from the first three which honored God through a “sweet savor” and brought reconciliation and fellowship with God. Instead, these offerings emphasize the guilt and penalty of sin and the need for an atoning sacrifice.

**The sin offering** dealt with sin in its essence and showed how far God would go to rid man of this malady. It specifically pictured Christ being made “sin on our behalf” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The writer of Hebrews declares, “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (13:11, 12).

Some teachers believe this section in Leviticus should end at the close of chapter 4, but we shall consider the presentation of the sin offering to extend through 5:13. Although the terms “trespass offering” or “guilt offering” occur twice in chapter five, verses 6 and 7 clearly emphasize “as a sin offering” and “for a sin offering” along with five other direct references.

**A poor offender** could bring as little as a bowl of flour for an accept-

able offering. Including 5:1-13 with the sin offering allows us to trace this provision. There's also no mention in this passage of “restitution,” a recognized characteristic of the trespass offering. The passage, however, could be transitional; there is a close relationship between the sin and guilt offerings.

Note that this offering is for unintentional “sins of ignorance,” in contrast to sins committed in deliberate rebellion against God's standards and defiance of His authority. God would not tolerate such conduct in His people; if it did happen, the penalty was death or excommunication.

When David under Nathan's denunciation awoke to the enormity of his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah, he did not offer a sacrifice (Psalm 51). Instead, he threw himself on God's mercy, pleading with “a broken spirit ... and contrite heart” that God in His grace would not despise him. After restoration, David would bring many bullocks as burnt offerings.

**In general**, a sinner's prominence in the Jewish culture determined the grade of his sin offering. “The anointed priests,” including all priests but primarily the high priest, were mentioned first. Note 4:3, “If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people” (NIV). The priest repre-

sented the people to such an extent that if he sinned, the people were considered guilty.

The sin offering for a priest equaled the offering for the entire nation. This showed the negative side of priestly representation. But the positive side is glorious. Christ, our priestly representative, so glorified God in His obedient suffering and death that we were made “the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

**The priest had to bring** a young bullock. Such an expensive sacrifice corresponded to his high position. “In ignorance” is not mentioned here; the priest was expected to know the facts about sin and to be spiritually sensitive. Because the bullock would bear the penalty of sin before a holy God and pictured Christ in His infinite perfection, it had to be without defect.

The priest would present his offering “before the Lord” near the tabernacle entrance, lay his hand on the animal’s head in the gesture of identification and slay the bullock. Death, the penalty or “wages” of sin, was met in the substitute, a token of Christ’s propitiation on the cross.

**Next the priest would take** some blood (the evidence of sacrificial death) inside the holy place, dip his finger into it and sprinkle it seven times before the veil, beyond which the Shekinah glory rested over the mercy seat. The blood was then before God in perfect atoning power.

Worship and ministry at the altar of incense, however, had been cut off by the high priest’s sin. So the blood had to be applied to the horns on the altar. This freed the priest to minister

again, lifting to God the fragrant incense of worship mingled with Israel’s prayers. The rest of the blood was poured out beside the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard.

The inward fat was also reserved exclusively for God, because it held the inner, stored-up energy of the sacrifice. When laid on the altar fire, it would quickly ignite, carrying with it any other offerings present.

**As in the peace offering**, the fat represented Christ’s inner zeal and devotion for God. In the sin offering, it emphasized the accomplishment of the Father’s purpose in Jesus, who would “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Luke 12:50 highlights this zeal for putting away sin: “But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!” Christ’s zeal to fulfill God’s purpose held Him to that “baptism,” by which He would conquer sin and death and establish a new creation in resurrection life.

After the blood of the bull had been sprinkled and its fat burned on the altar, all the rest—hide, head and entrails as well as the body proper—was taken outside the camp to a clean place where the ashes were poured out and burned completely.

This action was distinctive to the sin offering in its highest form. The writer of Hebrews explains that this Old Testament ritual pictured in detail the suffering and death of Christ. For our atonement He suffered, died and was buried outside the gate of Jerusalem.

**But why “outside the camp”** or “outside the gate”? Several answers have been proposed. Some say the offering was too sinful or “saturated

with sin" to remain in camp. But God had accepted its blood before the tabernacle veil and its fat upon the altar. (And although Christ died outside the city, Jerusalem was hardly too holy for Christ to suffer within its walls.) If, on the other hand, these portions were too holy to be burned within the camp, how could the whole burnt offering—certainly of equal, if not greater holiness—be offered there?

**Two other suggestions** are worth considering. 1) God dealt with sin apart from the law. This understanding agrees with both Hebrews 13:11-13 and Galatians. Or 2) this sacrifice portrayed God's full work of salvation, taking away into death all sin. Christ's suffering and death accomplished this in reality for all believers (Romans 6). The Christian, by union with Jesus in His death and resurrection, has ended his career as a sinner and has become a new creation.

The following section (4:13-21) concerns the sin of the whole congregation. Although God expected a priest to recognize his infraction immediately, He acknowledged that a sin might "escape the notice" of the general congregation. He allowed the people time to recognize their sin. Repentance was essential for cleansing, just as it is for salvation today through Jesus Christ.

**Another difference** in the ritual for the general congregation is that the tribal elders were responsible to lay their hands on the head of the sacrifice. Through these representatives, the people were identified with their sacrifice in its death for their sin.

The rest of the chapter discusses

the sin of individuals, whether a secular leader or a common person. Through the sacrifice of the entire animal in the previous offerings, the Lord demonstrated that his full, deep dealing with sin involves taking it away completely through death. But in this ritual, the meat of the sacrifice was given to the priest for food (5:13). Though thoroughly sacred, it was also economically useful.

When a secular leader became conscious of his sin, he had to offer a male goat without blemish. Because he bore greater responsibility, his sacrifice was to be larger than the female required for the common people. He laid his hand on the goat's head in the traditional gesture of identification and killed it "before the Lord" near the tabernacle entrance.

**The blood, however,** was not taken into the holy place. Unlike the sin of a priest or the entire congregation, this man's sin had not hindered the worship there. Part of the blood was sprinkled by the priest onto the horns of the altar of burnt offering, signifying the atoning and cleansing power of the blood. Burning the inward fat pictured again the inward zeal of Christ rising to God in His death on the cross.

Every priest was to eat of the sacrifice and only in the court of the tabernacle. Whatever touched the meat became consecrated to God (see 6:27). How could a mere man minister before God without consciously and deeply feeding on a sacrifice for sin?

The common Israelite offered a female goat or lamb. (The goat was probably preferable because of its role as sinbearer on the Day of

Atonement.) The ritual was the same as for the secular leader. Atonement would be made and forgiveness established; salvation could come only through the death of a spotless substitute.

**The first three levitical offerings** were bright, voluntary expressions of honor and devotion, rising to God as a pleasing aroma or “sweet savor.” But these last two were required sin offerings, designed to satisfy the righteous judgment of God. Because of their solemn character, some scholars have designated these offerings as “non-sweet savor.”

But there was one break in this atmosphere of judgment. In the common Israelite’s offering, the inward fat was to be burned “for a soothing aroma to the Lord” (4:31). When God watched a humble and contrite person claim atonement by faith through his sacrifice, He responded in what Christ called “joy in the presence of the angels” (Luke 15:10).

**The beginning of chapter 5** deviates from the actual sin offering. Instead, it points to various areas of sin that otherwise might go unnoticed. The first was failure to serve as a witness. When a trial was to take place, anyone who had seen or known anything relevant to the case was to report to court regardless of whether it was inconvenient or potentially embarrassing.

The second area concerned failure to separate from pagans. God’s laws against defilement arose primarily from His concern for Israel’s physical, moral and spiritual health. Direct contact with people who had minor infections or serious diseases could cause sickness or death.

But “to touch” their false religion was worse. Whether it’s an Israelite toying with an idol or a professed Christian studying one of the new pantheistic philosophies, such compromise can lead to spiritual death.

**The third area was lack** of self-control. Loose, thoughtless talk was sinful. Careless oaths to do evil—“I’ll get him for this”—could increase the pressure to harm that person. And a positive promise without action had the potential of becoming a lie, destroying confidence in the speaker or wrecking a friendship.

These sins required a full offering for the common people. But if someone was poor, he could bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons. Having two birds did not compensate for their small size; the text states one was “for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering” (5:7). Perhaps God was challenging the poor to enter into the highest of the offerings. Though small, the sacrifices were lifted to God; and the offerer was accepted in all that sweet savor.

**The priest would take** the two birds and nip off the first one’s head without severing it from the body. He would then sprinkle some of the blood for atonement against the wall of the altar and drain the rest at its base. The body would be burned to assure the aromatic fat rose to God.

When the priest prepared the second bird, he did it “according to the ordinance” (verse 10)—wringing off its head, pouring its blood beside the altar and plucking its crop and feathers—which qualified it as a perfect sweet savor. The body was torn, but not severed, by the wings to make it lie flat on the coals. The sac-

rifice became a whole burnt offering of complete honor and devotion to God. It pointed ultimately to Christ, the infinite burnt offering of the lowly as well as of the great.

Because sin offerings were required, God provided for even the very poor to bring one. Flour or grain, perhaps gleaned as from Boaz's fields, had to be threshed and ground or beaten into a fine texture to represent the true Bread of Life. As a substitute for a lamb or bird, this grain doubly emphasized the principle of substitution—for the poor and for the sinner.

**No oil was to be added** to a sin offering. The Holy Spirit, who convicts men of sin, would comfort an offerer only after his sacrifice had been accepted. And frankincense was reserved for a full "sweet savor" offering.

The priest would then take a "memorial handful" from the flour as in the meal offering and put it on the altar "with the offerings of the Lord by fire" (verse 12). Although Hebrews 9:22 states "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness," this principle is not invalidated here; the flour would be united with other blood offerings on the altar, furnishing atonement and for-

giveness. The rest of the flour belonged to the priest, just as the meat did in the common person's regular sin offering.

We've referred to the "law of sin offering" (6:24-30) several times. It highlighted the priest's role, especially concerning holiness. The priests were to slay the sin offering, as they did the whole burnt offering, "before the Lord" at the tabernacle entrance. After sprinkling the blood and burning the fat, they were commanded explicitly to eat the flesh, considered a most holy thing.

In essence, the priest made the sacrifice for sin part of himself, the source of his strength for service. Anything that touched this offering was consecrated to the Lord. Therefore, any earthen pot used to wash its blood stain from a garment had to be broken and one of bronze scoured and rinsed. All this was to impress upon the priests sin's seriousness.

**The final word** of the passage warns that under no circumstance was the sacrificial blood to be eaten by the priests. Nothing could be allowed to obscure the picture of God's radical dealing with sin, accomplished through the blood of His Son sacrificed "outside the gate."

### Questions for Leviticus 5, 6 and 7

1. Comparing the KJV with the NASB, consider the names used for Israel's final regular offering. Decide on the more fitting translation. 2. What elements in 5:14-6:7 were not mentioned in previous offerings?
3. What might be included in "the Lord's holy things"? How could one sin "unintentionally" in this area?
4. Why did God require both a ram and an offering of silver?
5. Verse 16 of chapter 5 speaks of sinning "against the holy thing" and adding one-fifth to the penalty. Find a similar regulation in 6:1-7. What is the connection?

6. In this latter section, what is the general nature of the offense?
7. Briefly define any offense in 6:2-5 that is not readily obvious.
8. What part should restitution have in salvation today?
9. Why did Isaiah use the word "guilt" for this offering (53:10)?
10. How would the five offerings, representing Christ, most fully meet our needs today?

# The Trespass Offering

Leviticus 5, 6 and 7

**Moses deals with this offering last in Leviticus 5:14-6:7 and 7:1-7. But this doesn't mean that the trespass or guilt offering was least important to God.**

Isaiah 53 is the first great exposition of Messiah's suffering and death. The prophet began by detailing the early obscurity of the Lord's Servant, then highlighting His rejection by the nation's leaders. One of the strongest descriptions of vicarious suffering follows.

Verse 7 introduces Christ's death "like a lamb that is led to slaughter"; verse 10 (KJV) reaches a climax: "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin (*asham*, 'guilt offering')."

Why did Isaiah emphasize the last of the regular offerings? The whole burnt offering was higher and grander with every part rising to God as a sweet savor. The peace offering was most attractive, picturing the believer reconciled to God and enjoying full fellowship. But Isaiah's choice was not arbitrary.

**The King James** translators recognized that the central idea of the Hebrew word describing the offering was "guilt," but they rendered the term in Leviticus as "trespass" to distinguish it from the preceding sin or guilt offering. Although the New American Standard Bible translates it "guilt offering" in the text, the section is titled "trespass offering." The New International Version uses "guilt" in both places.

We need a clear grasp of the relation between the sin offerings (Leviticus 4:1-5-5:13; 6:24-30) and the trespass offerings. Both deal with sin in its essential character—choosing self above God.

**The sin offering** emphasized God's condemnation of rebellion against His authority, which offended His holiness. It portrayed God's taking the whole old thing—brought by the Fall—away into death through the cross. (Paul wrote, "Our old self was crucified with Him.")

The trespass offering, on the other hand, stressed individual sin, particularly the injury inflicted on others. Because all sin involved guilt before God, He required a sacrifice. But when injury to another was involved, compensation (plus 20 per cent) was added.

The trespass offering is presented in two divisions. The first related to God—sin "against the Lord's holy things" (5:14-19). The second, considered equally sinful, concerned offenses against other men (6:1-7). The offender sacrificed a ram, which was a large, valuable animal. United with the restitution money, it became an expensive thing.

**The first set of offenses** is described generally as acting unfaith-

fully, in violation of the Sinai covenant but not necessarily in deliberate defiance of God (5:15). As in previous offerings, the sin was considered “unintentional.”

Among “the Lord’s holy things,” the one perhaps uppermost in the writer’s mind was the tithe, a primary support for the tabernacle. Faithfulness in this was a barometer of the nation’s spiritual level. Malachi spoke strongly, “Will a man rob God?” (3:7-10). The nation had done just that by withholding the tithe, and it called for a trespass offering.

**Although believers today** are not under law, the standards of life and devotion under grace are not lower than in the Sinai covenant. Giving must be voluntary, cheerful and in proportion to one’s income (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Unexpected income, like Old Testament firstfruits, could be an occasion for higher percentage giving. According to 2 Corinthians 8, 9, all Christians should feel responsible for meeting needs. And let us never belittle honesty regarding the proportion of our giving. Two believers in Acts 5 forfeited their lives for such failure.

Other “holy things” are just as precious to the Lord. The blood and inward fat of clean animals were sacredly His. The blood represented a spotless life poured out in atoning sacrifice, and the fat represented the inner energy of that sacrifice rising to God in obedience and devotion. To use these in cooking or to eat them at a neighbor’s feast, satisfying a self-indulgent appetite, offended God.

In our day, when we treat Christ’s infinite atonement and perfect obedience unto death as grounds

for spiritual lethargy, it is equally an offense to God and an injury to His cause.

**The penalty for the trespass** was twofold: a ram for a sacrifice and restitution in silver for an injury. As in any regular offering, the ram was without blemish to picture Christ’s perfection. The offerer put his hands on the head of the sacrifice to identify with it, and the ram was slain near the tabernacle entrance before the Lord.

The priest sprinkled part of the blood at the side of the brazen altar and poured the rest onto the base. The inward fat was offered to God on the altar fire, making complete atonement as the aroma arose to God. The priests would later eat the flesh in a holy place to signify the sacredness of God’s holy things and draw strength from feeding on the sacrifice.

**Offenders paid restitution** to the priests to compensate for any harm done to God’s cause. It was given “in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary,” which was as much before the Lord as slaying the ram. Moses determined the “valuation” of harm done and added one-fifth.

Christ has atoned for all guilt and made infinite restitution for man’s failure to bring God glory. But some people who have converted to Christ later in life have recognized the need to make restitution to those they had defrauded, and many have thus accomplished valiant service for the Lord. If Moses could estimate in his day, surely Christ can be trusted to direct His conscientious servants today.

Verses 17-19 cover a broad range



of offenses, described as doing “any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done.” Again a ram was required, and Moses’ “valuation” was consulted. Disobedience always causes considerable harm. When we act contrary to God’s will, we injure His honor and government.

**The second division** dealt with an Israelite’s relation to his neighbor (6:1-7). The sins in this passage are manifestations of “action unfaithfully against the Lord,” but not major crimes. Murder, rape, adultery, theft and false witness are considered elsewhere.

These sins may require time for the offender to fully realize his guilt (verse 4). Verse 3 may refer to sins people try to defend by saying, “Everybody does that.” But these are still sins that bring guilt before God. He wants his people free from them.

Specifically, these sins entail wrongly getting or keeping, by robbery or extortion, what belongs to someone else. Or perhaps a person finds lost property and lies to retain it. Swearing falsely, in any connection, is included with these sins.

**Cheating and lying**, so prominent today, demonstrate the essential nature of sin: self-gain regardless of God’s will and standards. The Christian should have died to that type of life in his death with Christ.

When a believer does sin against his neighbor, which must be the exception, Christ our Advocate intercedes for us on the basis of the propitiation He has made already at Calvary (1 John 2:1). That settles the question of guilt before God.

When we have sinned, let’s confess it quickly and humbly ask God’s

pardon. If we have caused material loss or physical harm, we should make every effort to set it right by accounting for entrusted funds, returning loans or clearing up old grievances and misunderstandings.

**We can derive** another application from this truth. Those of us who have received solid Bible instruction have been entrusted with a precious deposit. It reaches from the finished work of the cross and the assurance of salvation through our union with Christ, to the personal presence of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual nature of the church—and on to the truth of Christ’s second coming. This treasure belongs to those whose hearts are open to the Lord. If we withhold this message from them, we are guilty. (The added one-fifth might well be an enthusiastic appreciation of the truth.)

We have already discussed the details of the offering ritual, which emphasized its holiness (7:1-7). Although the offering dealt with seemingly minor offenses—such as neglected tithes and firstfruit offerings or a purse found but not returned—it does not mean it was unimportant to God or less sacred than the whole burnt offering.

**The male lamb clearly pictured** Christ. Its blood had to be sprinkled on the sides of the altar, and its flesh must be called “most holy” and be eaten by the priests in a holy place. The skin of the sacrifice was given to the sacrificing priest, who needed a constant reminder of God’s object lesson for Adam after the Fall.

In Exodus, plans for the tabernacle began with God’s throne, the mercy seat in the holy of holies. It

worked its way step by step through the holy place to the outside of the tabernacle and eventually to the court gate. So it was with the presentation of the offerings.

Moses began with the highest, the whole burnt offering, which was reserved absolutely for God—the blood, head, fat, entrails and legs. Rising as a sweet savor, the sacrifice typified Christ giving Himself completely to God in infinite obedience. The offerer was fully accepted by God. In the same way, believers today are welcomed at God’s throne.

**Next came the meal** or grain offering, which could not atone by itself but pictured Christ’s life of eventuated obedience and honor to God. On the altar, the fine flour offering united with the slain sacrifices to complete the messianic picture.

True fellowship was completed in the third and perhaps most attractive offering, symbolizing Christ who “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20). Even in the Old Testament representation, God’s righteousness was satisfied and his

honor advanced.

The priest identified with the peace offering by partaking of the right shoulder and the breast, representing service and love. Both are essential to a priest in any era. The offerer had the responsibility and privilege to share in a feast with his family, friends and neighbors. Everyone involved ultimately shared with God.

The last two sacrifices were essentially sin offerings. The first, the sin offering proper, concerned general sin. It traced God’s full work of putting away the old thing into death. The trespass or guilt offering brought into account specific offenses against God’s honor and government. Harm to His cause or injury to one’s neighbor would bring guilt, demanding a ram and restitution plus one-fifth in silver.

**God’s salvation** through the all-embracing sacrifice of Jesus Christ is pictured perfectly in Leviticus, written by Moses at God’s direction more than 1,400 years before Christ was born.

## Questions for Leviticus 8

1. Why did God have the whole congregation present at this service?
2. What spiritual works do the washing and clothing picture?
3. What special part of the ephod is described in Exodus 28 but taken for granted in Leviticus 8? How does its function compare to the breastplate?
4. From a study of Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21 and Ezra 2:63, what was the purpose of the Urim and the Thummim?
5. What was inscribed on Aaron’s gold headplate (Exodus 28:36)? Where does Zechariah say it will be seen again in the millennium? (Zechariah 14:20).

6. The New Testament explains that the high priest pictured Christ in His work on earth and that believers are also priests. What is the difference between the high priest's anointing in verse 12 and the regular priest's in verse 30?
7. What offerings were brought for the priests? What does this say about qualification for priestly service?
8. Why was the blood put on three specific places on the priest? See Exodus 29:20.
9. Read verses 8:25-27, keeping in mind that the Hebrew word for "consecration" or "ordination" means "filling the hands." What does consecration therefore emphasize?
10. What was God's purpose in extending the consecration service for seven days?

# God Consecrates His Priests

## Leviticus 8

**More than just our atoning Sacrifice, Christ is also our priest. Leviticus 8 begins a section presenting the inauguration and ministry of the priesthood.**

Though secondary to the sacrifices, the inauguration of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood was important to God. Through Moses He commanded the whole congregation to assemble in front of the tabernacle as witnesses. With a representative from each family group in Israel, perhaps as many as 3,000 men stood closely packed to fill the front half of the court.

The ceremony answered any lingering question Israel might have had about God's forgiving Aaron's failure with the golden calf. The large gathering also impressed Aaron and his sons with the honor and responsibility they were to have laid on them.

**But God's most important concern** was that His people understand priesthood. At Sinai He promised that Israel would be to Him "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). Similarly, believers today are declared to be a "holy priesthood" and "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Because Christ has made us "priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:6), we still need to understand the priesthood.

**Moses was conscious** of God's directing this ceremony. Three times in the first five verses he referred to God's commanding each step.

The potential priests were men

who had sinned. They needed cleansing, a righteous standing before God and divine enablement. Therefore the first movement of the ceremony pictured salvation.

Before the congregation, Moses cited God's command and washed Aaron and his sons. This symbol of moral and spiritual cleansing occurs throughout Scripture.

In his psalm of repentance, David pleads, "Cleanse me from my sin... Purify me with hyssop" (Psalm 51:2, 7). In "the gospel of Ezekiel" the prophet points to God's use of water to cleanse before He gives a new heart and puts His own Spirit within (36:25-27).

In Titus 3:5 Paul speaks of "the washing of regeneration," and in 1 Corinthians 6:11 he refers to the readers' salvation: "You were washed." And at the last supper, Christ contrasted for Peter the once-for-all bath to the need for repeated washing of one's feet (John 13:6-10).

**For Aaron and his sons**, this cleansing was also once-for-all. Thereafter they were only to wash their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle.

The second step was clothing the priests in proper garments. This portrayed the granting of a righteous

standing before God.

Their basic garment was a fine linen tunic with a sash. They also wore a linen undergarment and a linen headband or turban. The fine linen symbolized righteousness (Revelation 19:8).

**The garment symbolically** confirmed a righteous standing and full acceptance before God. Isaiah speaks of being “covered ... with a robe of righteousness” (61:10). And Paul says, “Put on [as a garment] the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14).

The high priest wore distinctive garments “for glory and for beauty” that proclaimed the honor of his office (Exodus 28:2). Because the high priest was a type of Christ, these special garments also typified the glory and beauty of Christ.

The first special garment was the full-length, blue robe. Simulated pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn alternated with golden bells that musically announced the high priest’s presence in the sanctuary. The blue proclaimed the heavenly quality and direction of Aaron’s ministry and pointed to Christ’s origin, character and priestly ministry.

The robe provided a background for the ephod’s striking display. This short, sleeveless, vest-like garment was richly embroidered with gold and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn. Attached to each shoulder was an onyx stone, set in gold and engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, six on each stone. In this way the high priest bore the tribes equally, in a place of strength, before the Lord for His blessing.

**The breastplate was beautiful**—with 12 precious stones, each en-

graved with the name of a tribe and set in gold filigree in four rows. About nine inches square, it was held in place by a pouch of the same material as the ephod. It was secured to Aaron’s chest by gold chains fastened to the shoulders and sides of the ephod. This allowed the high priest to hold on his heart, before God’s presence, each of the tribes with its unique character.

In the back fold of the pouch Moses placed the Urim and the Thummim (literally “lights” and “perfections”). These objects (perhaps precious stones) were used to determine God’s decisions. “Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord” (Exodus 28:30 NIV).

**Scripture does not show** the precise nature of the Urim and Thummim or the way they functioned. This may have been to discourage anyone from attempting to make copies and pretending to get answers from God. Some have suggested the Urim and Thummim functioned by a physical manifestation, such as lights showing in the stones. Or perhaps by putting on the ephod with the breastplate and Urim and Thummim, the high priest attained such a sense of access to God that he understood God’s message—as did the prophets to whom “the word of the Lord came.”

Finally, the linen turban had as a crown a plate of pure gold held at the front by a blue cord. It was engraved with the theme of true priesthood, “Holy to the Lord.”

These garments befitted Israel’s high priest. They also pictured the

glory of the true High Priest with the pure gold of deity interwoven with the blue of His heavenly origin, the purple of His kingly character and the scarlet of manhood entering into the sacrifice of the cross.

**The third step was the anointing.** The pouring of a small amount of special oil qualified a person or object for the Lord's service. For a person, it also symbolized the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Two anointings took place. At this point, Aaron and the tabernacle, altar and laver were anointed. Its purpose is expressed in the Hebrew verb meaning "to make holy" (Leviticus 8:10-12). The KJV translates this "sanctify," while the NASB and NIV use "consecrate."

The typology of anointing was fulfilled when Christ, the true High Priest, was baptized and the Holy Spirit came upon Him. Christ was also the true Tabernacle of God and His cross the true altar and cleansing laver.

Aaron's sons were then also clothed in the fine linen tunic, sash and turban that speak of righteousness. Their anointing, however, awaited the completion of the sacrifice. Similarly, at Pentecost the anointing of the body of believers followed the cross, resurrection and ascension.

**The next stage** of the priests' consecration was the sacrifice, which was also presented in three steps.

First is atonement by the sin offering. Rather than individual sins, it presented God's dealing with sin in its entirety. Moses killed the bullock, sprinkled some of the blood on the altar and poured the rest at its base

to render it holy. He then burned the fat on the altar and had the carcass burned outside the camp. Atonement had been accomplished. The priests' washing signified their individual application of that atonement.

The second offering was a ram, the first of two unblemished male sheep offered. This whole burnt offering was the basis for the priests' clothing because it secured righteousness before God. As the entire ram on the altar fire rose as a pleasing aroma to God, it pictured Christ's obedient devotion, even to His death on the cross.

Someone might ask, "But where is the faith in this?" Faith was displayed in the one and only thing the priests did in this step of their consecration—they laid their hands on the head of the sacrifice in the gesture of identification. They were one with their offering; its standing before God was theirs. This was salvation "to the one who does not work, but believes" (Romans 4:5).

**The second ram** was the consecration or ordination itself (Leviticus 8:22). This sacrifice belonged with the sweet savor offerings. Because it included a grain offering, it was similar to the peace offering. But it also had a significant distinction. After the priests identified themselves with their sacrifice, Moses slew the ram and put some of the blood on the right ear lobe, right thumb and right big toe of Aaron and his sons. He who would serve God must be marked by the blood of the sacrifice, "being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10). All that enters his thoughts, work and conduct must

come into conformity with Christ's death.

At the climax of the ceremony, Moses took the fat of the ram, its right shoulder or thigh and samples of three kinds of unleavened bread. He then arranged them on the open, empty hands of Aaron and his sons. The word for this ceremony literally means "filling their hands."

**Although the blood placed** on Aaron and his sons is a witness and guard against sin, God pictured consecration positively. We have our hands filled with Christ, the Sacrifice. He, in all the glory of a perfect work, is the One we present as a wave offering to honor our God. As pictured here, consecration also means that our attention is centered on Christ, the slain Sacrifice who is now our living Savior and Lord.

To complete the sacrifice, Moses took the selected parts from the priests' hands and offered them on the altar fire, along with the whole burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. God had given Moses the breast of the ram, so he waved it before the Lord as his personal offering.

**As high priest,** Aaron was anointed before the sacrifices were made, just as our true High Priest was anointed with the Spirit before His infinite sacrifice. Later at Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out on believers. Now that sacrifices were completed, Moses took the anointing oil, added blood from the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his sons as well as on their garments. This purified them by the atoning blood and qualified them for service. By this common anointing of Aaron and the priests, they formed one priestly

body—with Aaron as head and the Holy Spirit's power available for ministry.

In a far deeper way at Pentecost, all believer-priests were empowered for ministry and "baptized into one body" with Christ as our head by the anointing of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

After the ceremony, the consecration was not over. The priests were to take their nourishment from the meat of the sacrifice and the unleavened bread of the offering. What they did not eat they had to burn.

Afterward, they were to stay at the tabernacle entrance continuously for a week. This was a time for the priests to contemplate what their consecration meant. The seven days also pictured that the priests must live the rest of their lives as "before the Lord"—nourished by the meat of the sacrifice and in full realization of their consecration to Him.

In the ceremony, two pictures stand out strikingly. The first is the priest, in preparation for consecration, being marked by blood on his ear, thumb and big toe. Henceforth the blood of the sacrifice was to be the guardian and inspiration of his thoughts, work and conduct.

**The second picture** is the priest standing before Moses with hands extended, empty and open, about to be filled with the sacrifice. They had to be empty if they were to be filled. Moments before when they laid their hands on the head of the sacrifice, they had to be empty to receive the perfect righteousness of the Sacrifice who was portrayed.

Now they had to be empty of self-will and self-promotion if they would

be able to hold Him as the wave offering to God and the accepted Sacrifice freely offered to others.

### Questions for Leviticus 9 and 10

1. In Leviticus 9:1, what does the eighth day mean to Aaron and his sons? What does it usually signify spiritually?
2. Why must Aaron bring sin and burnt offerings for himself before making an offering for all Israel? What does Hebrews 7:27 show in contrast?
3. In 9:21, what is the symbolism of the breast and the shoulder (thigh) and, in 9:24, the meaning of the fire from the Lord consuming the offering?
4. How would you describe the attitude of Nadab and Abihu and define the "strange fire" (Leviticus 10:1, 2)?
5. Why shouldn't Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar uncover their heads or tear their garments in response?
6. How did Aaron defend his sons' not eating the meat of the people's sin offering?



# A Glorious Beginning and Strange Fire

Leviticus 9 and 10

**G**od also speaks through His actions. Leviticus 9 and 10 show His approval of the priests' first service and His judgment of their first failure.

After a week of consecration with repeated daily sacrifices, Aaron and his sons were ready to begin their service. It was the "eighth day," an expression in Scripture not only for a new week, but also for the beginning of a new period.

This "eighth day" began the service of the levitical priesthood. It was to continue until A. D. 79 with the two notable breaks: the Babylonian captivity and the defiling of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C.

As he did for the priests' consecration a week earlier, Moses directed the elders and congregation to be present for this initial service. He first called for a sin offering of a calf and a burnt offering of a ram for Aaron and his sons. A clean and acceptable priesthood was necessary.

**Then Moses directed** the people to bring offerings for the whole nation: a male goat for the sin offering, a year-old calf and lamb without defect for a burnt offering and an ox and a ram for peace offerings with an accompanying grain offering. The incentive for these offerings was not a fellowship feast; the thousands present made that impractical. The in-

centive was the ultimate in worshipful fellowship: The Lord would appear to them that day.

**With the congregation** present, Moses restated God's command for Aaron to proceed with the sacrifices so that His glory may appear to them.

This principle became permanently manifest in the Resurrection following the finished sacrifice of the cross. God's infinite excellence of character shines out in the righteousness satisfied and the love expressed at Calvary.

Aaron killed the calf in accord with the established order, yet a new symbolic move was introduced—Aaron's sons presented the blood to him (Leviticus 9:9). More than just giving them a recognized part in the service, it showed their appreciation of the sacrifice and its application. This is also our privilege today as we take the cup at the Lord's Table.

**Dipping his finger in the blood,** Aaron sprinkled the horns of the altar, the emblems of its power. Ceremonially this brought it into proper relation to God for His service. He poured the rest of the blood at the altar's base. Aaron then offered the inner fat on the altar.

He took the rest of the carcass outside the camp and burned it. This pictures God dealing fully on the cross with the old thing we were as sinners.

The burnt offering of the ram came next. The regular priests handed Aaron not only the blood to be sprinkled on the altar sides, but also the pieces of the ram to be laid on the altar fire and rise as a pleasing aroma to God. Thus the two requirements were met. Sin was atoned for by the sin offering, and acceptance was obtained through the whole burnt offering.

**All was now ready** for the offerings on behalf of the people. Aaron first took the goat for the sin offering. Atonement is necessary first. It was a goat—the offering for an individual who had sinned—rather than the bullock of Leviticus 4:14. In that verse it was for a sin committed by the people corporately; here it is a matter of each individual's having sinned. So Aaron slew the goat, and with his sons he sprinkled its blood and offered its fat on the altar. Israel's sin was "covered."

Next came the burnt offering of a spotless year-old calf and lamb to establish the people in acceptance as righteous before God. Moses had just performed this ritual for the priests themselves.

Aaron offered the yearling calf with its fine potential and the lamb with its unresisting meekness as a double whole burnt offering, a sweet savor to Jehovah. The grain offering was also observed because no aspect of Messiah's work was to be missing. The "memorial" handful was placed on the altar with the burnt offerings,

and the rest was held for the priests' use.

**The peace offerings** completed the sacrifices. The ox and the ram were the largest sacrificial animals. They challenged Israel to a high appreciation of the peace and fellowship they symbolized. Aaron slew the two animals, took their blood from his sons, and sprinkled it on the sides of the altar. In an act reminiscent of "filling the hands" in consecration, he placed the inward fat of both animals and the ram's fat tail on the breasts of the ox and ram. Then he placed the portions of fat on the altar as God's. But the breasts and right shoulders became the priests' portion after they waved them before God in worship.

**With the offerings complete,** Aaron lifted his hands toward the people to bless them, perhaps in the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26, and he stepped down from the altar.

One can almost hear the hush as Moses and Aaron solemnly entered the tabernacle for Moses to speak directly with God. The two soon came out to bless the people again and prepare them for God's appearing. God kept His promise through Moses. The Shekinah appeared in full splendor from above the mercy seat and was seen by all the people. And fire from God's presence consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar.

No one could question God's acceptance of those sacrifices. Only the Resurrection was a better proof. The people's first reaction was a shout of joyous wonder. But they immediately fell to the ground in reverent awe and fear.

**Another part** of Israel's worship was also inaugurated at this time, the continual burnt offering, authorized in Exodus 29:38-43. A yearling lamb was to be offered in the morning and at twilight each day, along with a meal and a drink offering. It was to symbolize Israel's continuous worship and devotion to God with every part of the offerings being wholly for God and rising to Him as a pleasing aroma.

The offering looked forward to the cross. But Christ's infinite sacrifice was a completed, once-for-all work. His sacrifice is like the continuous one because it is eternally valid. "He always lives to make intercession" for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Today, believers can treasure Christ's finished sacrifice. But we are also to honor His request that we continually remember Him in the Lord's Supper.

**In addition to our petitions** for the day, our morning and evening personal and family prayers should have something of the worship and devotion of the continual burnt offering. Regular, systematic Scripture reading gives us a time when God can speak to our hearts in a special way.

The levitical historical section continues with the action of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's oldest sons. They took their censers, put fire in them, placed incense on the coals and "offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1).

It was Aaron who was commanded to burn incense on the golden altar in the holy place (Exodus 30:7-9). Aaron may have given his

sons the censers to assist him in bringing live coals from the brazen altar to the altar of incense. But that in no way authorized what they did here.

**The "strange fire"** they offered must certainly have been from a source other than the brazen altar, where fire "out from before the Lord" had so recently consumed the sacrifice (9:24). Leviticus 16:12 explicitly says the coals for burning the incense are to be taken from the altar.

The description of their action is absolute: "which He had not commanded them." They acted in disdain, if not defiance, of God's order. It may have been an attempt to seize Aaron's prerogative. But it certainly was an act of presumptuous self-will and bold self-exaltation.

God's judgment was immediate: "Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them" (10:2). God will maintain His holiness. How soon He acts may differ, but His action is certain.

Moses gave Aaron God's word about this: "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored" (10:3). Aaron understood and was silent. God is concerned about reverence in those who profess to serve Him (see also Leviticus 21:6).

He also has a strong concern over the first break in the purity of a new work of His. In Acts 5:1-11, He dealt severely with the first break in the church's purity by Ananias and Sapphira.

**The spiritual counterpart** of "strange fire" is no more suitable to ministry now than it was then. There is no place in a ministry for oratory

without a biblical message, for sentimental emotionalism, for jokes that only divert attention from the message and for the subtle building up of personal pride and importance.

What is even more alien is the undermining of the Bible and the substitution of rationalism, humanism and modern psychology for proclamation of Scripture. God rejects any professed worship that is not under the authority of His Word and that does not come from the flames on the altar of the cross.

Moses called on two cousins to carry the bodies of Aaron's sons outside the camp, presumably to bury them. But Moses told Aaron and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, not to uncover their heads or tear their priestly garments. The rest of Israel could mourn for them.

**The three priests** were the remnant who must continue to carry out God's commands. On pain of death, they were not to leave the tabernacle.

The Lord then spoke to Aaron. He forbade him and his sons to drink wine or strong drink before coming to the tabernacle for service. It was a "perpetual statute" with the penalty of death.

The priest must be able to distinguish between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean. He is also responsible to teach the people God's revelation. But he cannot do these properly if he is under the influence of alcohol. Because of the timing of this statute, it may have been that Nadab and Abihu had been drunk. If so, it is significant that God still held them responsible for their actions.

**For a Christian, drunkenness** is also forbidden. It is hard to conceive of a believer drinking before he is to speak in church, teach a class or come to the Lord's Table. A Christian bears a responsibility to the younger or weaker person about the use of alcohol.

Finally, Moses instructed Aaron and his two surviving sons about eating the remainder of the offerings. They were to eat the remaining grain offering beside the altar as a holy privilege. The breast of the peace offering was theirs to wave before the Lord and eat in a clean place with their families. Likewise they were to lift up the thigh toward God and eat it reverently. As priests today, the love and strength of the Peace Offering of Calvary is also ours to appropriate.

**Moses searched** for the goat of the people's sin offering and learned it had been burned. In anger he asked Eleazar and Ithamar why they had not eaten it. God had intended that by reverently eating it, they would complete the bearing away of the people's sins by making the offering a part of themselves and ministering in its strength.

Aaron defended his sons. They had properly offered their own sin offering and burnt offering, and God had accepted them. Aaron asked if it would have been acceptable to God if he had tried to eat the sin offering when he could think of nothing but what he had experienced that day. His sons could not properly appropriate Israel's sin offering with their minds stunned and hearts overwhelmed by Nadab's and Abihu's death.

**Moses accepted this.** A heart bowed low by the results of sin and concerned about the ritual's sincerity is more acceptable to God than an external observance with mind and heart far away.

The fire that came forth from God underscores the emphasis of each of

these two chapters. The first signaled God's joyous acceptance of the sacrifices, lighting a flame to bear aloft the sweet savor of Israel's devotion. The second fire executed judgment on self-assertive, presumptuous disregard of God's order of worship.

### Questions for Leviticus 11 and 12

1. How would you describe the transition in content from chapters 1-10 to 11-15?
2. The animals declared clean for food in 11:2-7 are also acceptable for what other use? Is there a spiritual principle here?
3. What does "chewing the cud" picture or symbolize? What does such an animal eat?
4. What kind of animal has a radically different foot from those that may be eaten?
5. What distinguishing characteristic of seafood is pictured by a fish having fins? What function of scales might seem to have a spiritual application?
6. What types of birds are excluded?
7. Symbolically, why is one group of insects counted clean? Who in the New Testament took advantage of their being clean?
8. Compare verses 44 and 45 with the introduction of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2). Who quoted from verse 44 in the New Testament?
9. In chapter 12, what is the spiritual reason for the long period of cleansing after childbirth?
10. For what reason might the cleansing period after a boy's birth be half as long as for a girl?

# Distinguishing the Clean in Common Life

Leviticus 11 and 12

**The “law of the common life,” beginning in Leviticus 11, gives both instruction for daily living and one of the Old Testament’s strongest calls for holiness.**

Real holiness shows itself most clearly in the common activities of life; it is here that a person’s true character comes out. Leviticus 11-15 presents such matters of practical holiness as what was clean for the Israelite to eat, cleansing after childbirth, treatment of leprosy and basic hygiene.

This material all leads up to the great Day of Atonement for Israel’s sins (Leviticus 16). And from this section, Peter takes his call for Christian holiness: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

**It is important how we view such a passage of law.** We can recognize God’s concern for His people’s physical health in the dietary laws (Leviticus 11) and more strongly in the rules for leprosy (Leviticus 13) and hygiene (Leviticus 15). But we must also recognize the spiritual aspects.

The restrictive dietary laws helped keep God’s people separate from the surrounding nations with their vile, idolatrous practices. And for almost 20 centuries, these laws helped preserve the Jews as a people despite being scattered throughout the world without a homeland, government, religious center and often their own language.

In Christ, our separation is not national or racial, but spiritual—a matter of faith and the new birth.

**To many Bible students,** the strongest aspect of the dietary regulations is symbolic. Because the first third of Leviticus is filled with types and symbols confirmed by New Testament references, one expects to find symbolism in the passage on clean and unclean food. In the principles that mark food as clean physically, God pictures what characterizes good mental and spiritual food.

Chapter 11 discusses four categories of living things: land animals, fish, birds and insects. Grain is inferred to be clean.

The clean land animals are cattle, sheep and goats—the only large animals acceptable for sacrifices. Leviticus sets the principle that only things acceptable to God as a “sweet savor” are to be received as food for our spiritual lives.

**God gives two qualifications** for a clean animal. The first is a fully divided hoof, in contrast to a padded paw with claws. The hoof speaks of a careful, surefooted walk that leaves a clean-cut mark.

Today we should ask, “Does what I read, listen to and think about nourish a walk that is careful and

surefooted by faith in Christ and that leaves a clear testimony for those who follow?”

The second requirement is that it chews its cud. The word “ruminates” means both “to chew the cud” and what the action pictures, “to meditate.” Through the symbol, God is saying that clean spiritual food is marked by meditation.

**The message that feeds God’s people** is usually not the one that is hastily prepared from an idea “that just hit me.” It has more in common with the process of an animal that lies down and diligently rechews its food until it is ready to produce good meat or rich milk.

Verses 4 to 8 re-emphasize that both traits are needed. The camel chews the cud but does not have a split hoof. His foot has a mushy pad that leaves an indistinct mark.

The coney (rock badger) and the rabbit also chew their food diligently, but they lack split hooves; they are unclean. And at times both are carriers of diseases, including bubonic plague.

**The pig has a split hoof** but does not chew the cud. He enjoys good food but also seems to enjoy garbage. It is often cited as proof of God’s care that He forbade pork, which especially on the wilderness journey might have been undercooked and have spread trichinosis.

In Isaiah’s day, eating “swine’s flesh” had become a sign of rebellion against God (65:4). It also may have been prominent in Canaanite religion. French archaeologist de Vaux found large deposits of pig bones in pre-Israelite levels in Palestine cities.

Animals with neither mark were

obviously unclean. The cat family, for example, does not chew the cud and has padded paws with retractable claws. This gives a soft tread to a destructive purpose—hardly a mark of acceptability to God.

Touching the dead body of any of these animals made the Israelite unclean until evening. Death brought out their uncleanness even more clearly.

**The second group of clean animals was fish.** The requirements were simple: They must have fins and scales.

Sea creatures without fins, such as eels, resemble a snake too closely to be acceptable. And other aquatic life without fins and scales—shellfish and scavengers—tend to stay on the bottom and are subject to bacterial attack and the effects of the murkiness and stagnation.

God’s ideal is more like the rainbow trout flashing past in a clear mountain stream or the salmon as it comes in from the sea. It pictures food suited to what Christ called “life ... more abundantly” (John 10:10 KJV).

Scales give protection. The Hebrew word is also used to describe what we call a “coat of mail.” This protection is symbolic of the Christian’s relationship with the world. Believers are “partakers of the divine nature” who have “escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

Clean fish must also have fins. These give balance, propulsion and direction that are vital to coming up to God’s ideal. Clean food for our minds and hearts will have the steady balance of Scripture, a forward spiritual drive and the specific

guidance to reach the place of God's perfect will.

**The third category of animals is birds.** Because they are generally clean, only the exceptions are listed. Birds' ability to soar above the earth seems to enter into their being clean. Unless negated by other traits, the freedom of flight puts the bird symbolically in touch with the realm of the heavenly, where the Christian's blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3) and from which comes the Bread of Life (John 6:51, 58).

The exceptions do not fit into neat categories, but three types cover most of them. Carrion feeders like the vulture, buzzard, raven and sea gull are unclean because of their food. Birds of prey like eagles, kites, falcons and hawks are disqualified because they are wanton killers. And the night birds, chiefly owls, seem to be rejected because they love "darkness rather than the light" (John 3:19).

Two other exceptions are the bat and the ostrich. The bat (Leviticus 11:19) is a night-flier but is actually a disguised mammal. Such confusion is not God's ideal for His people. The ostrich (11:16), which is the largest bird, is swift on its feet but unable to fly. Gorgeous plumage at the expense of useful wings makes it unacceptable as food for God's people.

**The fourth group is winged insects.** Only those like locusts and grasshoppers are clean. They leap from the earth, symbolically similar to a bird's flight. John the Baptist, last of the Old Testament prophets, found them, with wild honey, able to provide good nourishment.

Verses 23 to 35 deal chiefly with

the unclean insects, small rodents and lizards that "swarm" on the ground. Among these is the chameleon; he who changes his color to conform to his surroundings is unclean to God.

To touch these creatures' dead bodies renders one "unclean until evening." And to pick one up, risking contact with one's clothing, means the clothes must be washed as well.

If one of these small creatures dies and falls into an earthen vessel, that vessel becomes unclean and must be broken. Such a polluted vessel makes any liquid poured into it unclean. And that liquid, in turn, makes any food onto which it is poured unclean. Even an oven or hearth onto which an unclean carcass has fallen must be broken.

**Two things, however,** cannot be defiled: a spring (or cistern gathering water) and seed to be used for planting. The spring is undefiled because its supply of fresh water is ever renewed from its deep sources.

Christ shows this to be a picture of life by the Spirit. He said to the Samaritan woman, "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Seed for planting cannot be defiled because it pictures salvation. The kernel of wheat must fall into the ground and die before it rises up in a new, productive clean life (see John 12:24).

Verses 41 to 43 re-emphasize the warning against any creature that "swarms [or moves about] on the earth," whether it crawls, walks on all fours or goes on many feet. This condemnation resembles Revelation's



judgment of “earth dwellers” (3:10), the unsaved who are too closely tied to the things of this earth.

Chapter 11 concludes with a call that sums up God’s purpose in His laws and in much of His dealing with us in the New Testament: “Be holy; for I am holy” (verses 44, 45). The last verse (47) might be paraphrased, “get started by making a distinction between the clean and the unclean.”

**Chapter 12 continues the law of the common life** with a brief treatment of one subject: cleansing in connection with childbirth.

The procedure is stated simply and clearly. If the child is a boy, the mother is to be in the full degree of uncleanness for a week; whatever she touches becomes unclean. She gets a well-enforced rest.

On the eighth day, the boy is circumcised, and the mother begins 33 days of less severe uncleanness. She is not allowed at the tabernacle or to touch holy things.

If the child is a girl, the mother has two weeks of intense uncleanness, followed by 66 days of more moderate restriction. At the end of the 40 or 80 days, the mother brings a yearling lamb for a burnt offering and a turtledove or pigeon for a sin offering. She presents them to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle to be offered by the priest. The mother is now clean; she and her child are in good standing before the Lord.

If the family was poor, she could bring two clean birds, one for each sacrifice. This is what Mary brought after the birth of the Lord Jesus (Luke 2:22-24). The visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:11) must have been more than 40 days after Christ’s birth; one

can hardly imagine Mary’s not bringing a lamb if she had received the Magi’s gift of gold.

**At creation** God commanded, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). And after the Flood, He gave the same command (Genesis 9:1) to Noah. Throughout the Bible, the birth of a child is the cause of joy and thanksgiving, and childlessness is the occasion for sorrow and even unwarranted shame.

**Yet childbirth brings** such deep uncleanness upon the mother that for a time everything she touches is made unclean. The reason for such an extended withdrawal from normal life is very grave.

It takes prolonged meditation in a humble and contrite heart to appreciate Christ’s word to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6), and to enter into David’s confession in Psalm 51:5: “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”

By natural birth, all are constituted sinners. All whose heredity is marked by the Fall must be born again, “born of the Spirit.” One reason for the mother’s separation was to provide an “indoctrination session” when she could reflect upon this wisdom about her child’s nature.

Few commentators speculate why the cleansing period after a boy’s birth is half as long as for a girl. So I suggest this answer with hesitance.

**Paul shows** that circumcision points to the “removal of the body of the flesh” (Colossians 2:11). This agrees with the spiritual purpose of cleansing after childbirth. The time of uncleanness is cut in half because in circumcision boys share with their

mothers the burden of manifesting God's deep dealing with the inheritance of sin.

In Leviticus 11, meditation, which is pictured by chewing the cud, is a primary mark of cleanness. So in chapter 12, the means used to impress the mother that natural birth brings a sinful heredity is a

time of meditation.

**That, in turn, prepares her** to bring to God a burnt offering and a sin offering, emblems of the atoning sacrifice of the cross. By this she is clean and her child accepted by the Lord. And by the cross, we are also enabled to respond to God's call: "Be holy, for I am holy."

### Questions for Leviticus 13 and 14

1. Why are there two long chapters on the diagnosis and cleansing of leprosy?
2. In 13:3-8, what indicates a skin disease is leprosy?
3. Why might one completely white with leprosy be pronounced clean, but an outbreak of "raw flesh" render him unclean again (13:12-15)?
4. Why, in verse 44, is leprosy in the head considered especially serious? What is its spiritual significance?
5. If no remedy was known for leprosy, why does chapter 14 infer some were healed?
6. Trace what the priest does for the healed leper in 14:3-7. What is pictured spiritually by his actions?
7. Does the release of the blood-marked bird parallel the goat of Leviticus 16 bearing away Israel's sins into the wilderness or does it more closely picture Romans 4:25 with the "justification" here being the declaring of the leper clean?
8. What did it mean to this man to have the blood put on his ear, thumb and big toe and the oil put over the blood and on his head?
9. What spiritually significant items in the cleansing of an infected house parallel those in the cleansing of a leper?

# Leprosy Diagnosed and the Leper Cleansed

Leviticus 13 and 14

**The lessons of Leviticus 13 and 14 about leprosy also have applications for the ways we must guard our lives against outbreaks of sin.**

Continuing its instructions for dealing with uncleanness in people's lives, Leviticus now focuses on leprosy and related diseases covered by the Hebrew word. Although we may overlook this section, God counted it important. It is no longer, for example, than the combined prophecies of Jonah and Malachi. Furthermore, chapter 14's ritual for a leper's cleansing pictures spiritual truths comparable to those behind the offerings of the early chapters.

Chapter 13 presents the diagnosis and quarantine of leprosy. Because no remedy was known, there is nothing about treatment. Yet it is inferred that some, perhaps many, will be healed.

**God heals in His sovereign grace**—at times in answer to prayer, as He did for Miriam (Numbers 12:10-14), and at other times through a servant, as Naaman was healed through Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-14).

One may wonder, though, whether the priests to whom Christ sent the lepers He healed had ever seen a healed leper before. It's possible some of these priests were among the large number who "became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Christ

said the healed lepers were to show themselves "for a testimony to them" (Luke 5:14).

**Most commentators see** leprosy as a picture of sin. There are many similarities, from a hidden beginning to progressive, external outbreaks and a miserable end if not healed. The aspect of sin that Leviticus most clearly suggests is the outbreak of the old self which the New Testament calls "the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

The first steps presented in Leviticus 13 are for diagnosis. Any sign that might indicate leprosy, such as "a swelling or a scab or a bright spot," demands prompt attention (verse 2). If it is leprosy, it must be recognized as such. It calls for priestly judgment.

Similarly, sin demands honest self-judgment in the conscious presence of a holy God (Isaiah 6:5; Job 42:5-6).

Leprosy was identified by a tendency to spread, to turn hair in the infected area white and to appear to be deeper than the skin. If these marks are present, it is leprosy. The person is unclean and must be segregated.

**But if the white spot** does not seem deeper than the skin and the

hair has not turned white, the priest is to isolate him for a week and re-examine him. If there is no change, he is isolated a second week. Then if the infection is fading and the scab has not spread, it is declared harmless. The person is to wash his clothes and be clean. But if the scab has spread, it is pronounced leprosy.

Taking a spiritual application, leprosy's identifying mark of "quick raw flesh" (verse 10) pictures an outbreak of "the flesh" in its New Testament sense. Leviticus calls it "chronic (literally, old) leprosy," similar to our "old self" of sin to be laid aside (Ephesians 4:22).

**If the whiteness of leprosy** has spread over a person's whole body, he is to be pronounced clean (Leviticus 13:12, 13). Some modern writers suggest this may be a different disease described by the same term. But the spiritual significance stands as long as it is a related disease.

When the illness has run its course through the entire body, the leper is no longer a danger to infect others. One who has been completely taken over by sin and who openly acknowledges his condition is also no danger to others and may even serve as a warning.

But if the leper has a fresh outbreak of raw flesh, he is unclean and must be segregated. The same is true for his spiritual counterpart if he allows the "raw flesh" of his sin nature to break out anew.

**Next Leviticus warns** of points where leprosy can easily make entrance (verses 18-28). A boil as it starts to heal and a burn are danger spots. Spiritually, an area where trouble and pain have centered or a place where one has been "burned"

by others' attitudes or actions is the spot where the flesh most easily attacks.

Leviticus also gives special attention to leprosy of the head (verses 29-44). The diagnostic marks are the same as before, but with the hair of the infected area having a "thin yellowish" condition (verse 30). The priestly examination and the segregation of verified cases also follow the usual order. The emphasis on the seriousness of leprosy on the head is striking, however (verse 44).

One explanation is that leprosy there would be particularly distressing because it is obvious to all. From the spiritual standpoint, an outbreak of the flesh in one's thinking would be the ultimate in uncleanness.

**God's Word is emphatic** that when leprosy struck, Israel must act, not go on as though nothing has happened. The priest must learn whether the condition is really leprosy. If so, he must segregate the person until he is healed.

In most countries today, the physical disease is no longer a threat; and in the remainder it is being defeated. But the spiritual disease dominates the world today. And as it breaks out in Christians, the result is more often self-defense or self-pity than honest self-judgment before God.

The Israelite leper with his torn garment, disheveled hair, a patch over his mustache and his cry of "unclean" pictures for us the consequences of sin, the result of the outbreak of the flesh (verse 45). But he is also a man for whom Christ died and rose again, as chapter 14 suggests.

The final section of chapter 13 discusses leprous-like mildew or fungus growths on garments or leather goods. Nothing resembling leprosy is to have a place with God's people.

**If the spot being observed** continues to spread even after washing, the garment must be burned. But if the mark has faded, the article may still be used although the spot must be cut out.

Chapter 14 presents one of the most significant ceremonies of the Old Testament—the cleansing of the leper whom God has healed. It pictures in detail what we appropriate through Christ in coming to God out of the shame and alienation of sin.

**The first scene** is the edge of the camp, where open fields stretch into the desert. The priest has come following word that a leper has been healed and is ready for examination and cleansing.

Relatives or friends bring the former leper, and the priest carefully examines him. Finding no sign of infection, he calls for two live clean birds and material to make a sprinkling brush: a stick of cedar wood, scarlet yarn and a bunch of hyssop.

The leper's possible poverty is not the reason two birds are specified nor are they for two different offerings. Like the two goats on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), they are for one sin offering. The first goat dies under the penalty of sin, but the second goat is sent away into the wilderness. So in chapter 14 the first bird is slain as a sacrifice for sin, while the second bird pictures a more glorious aspect of the leper's cleansing.

**The details** are significant: The first bird is to be slain "in an earthenware vessel over running (literally, living) water." The heavenly One also gave His life in the earthen vessel of our humanity. The water is to help collect the bird's blood and to have enough liquid to perform the cleansing.

**But the spiritual picture** shows the life-giving water of the Spirit uniting with the blood to cleanse away sin's stain. The priest dips the living bird in the blood of the slain so it is identified with the sacrifice. He also takes the brush, dips it in the blood and water and sprinkles the healed leper seven times. He is now identified with and marked by the renewing sacrifice.

As the priest solemnly pronounces the healed leper clean, he does something unique in levitical ritual. He lets the live bird go to rise and fly free. It is a picture of resurrection—ultimately of Christ's.

Furthermore, this picture of resurrection takes place at exactly the point Paul states in Romans 4:25: "(Jesus) was delivered up because of our transgressions" (seen in the first bird's being slain) "and was raised because of our justification" (seen in the second bird's rising and flying free).

**The levitical ritual** for the priest's declaring the leper clean and accepted by God points to the believer's assurance of justification with God because Christ was raised from the dead.

Now clean and characterized by the power of a new life by the Spirit, the former leper can begin to act for himself. He is to wash his clothes,

but he must also deal strictly with his conduct before others. He must shave off all his hair, representing a rejection of all the products of his former life as a leper (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Then he bathes and “is clean” physically (Leviticus 14:8).

He may now enter the camp but not go into his tent for a week. He needs time for reflection on his experience and the truths God set before him at the edge of camp before he gets involved again in household duties. And he also must prepare his mind and heart for the seventh and eighth days.

At the end of the week, the man again shaves all his hair, even to the eyebrows. Every bit of the products of the old life are put off. And he again washes his clothes and bathes completely. From then on, he is to be in “new creation” cleanness.

**The climactic ceremony on the eighth day** pictures the nature of the man’s new life and God’s provision for it. The setting is the door of the tabernacle where Israel’s sacrifices are offered. The priest brings the man there with his offerings of two male lambs without blemish, a yearling ewe lamb, a grain offering (about six quarts) with oil mixed in, and a small amount of oil in a separate container.

The ceremony begins with presentation before the Lord of one of the male lambs with the oil as a trespass (guilt) offering. The last and least prominent of the regular levitical offerings is put first.

**There are two possible reasons.** In outbreaks of “the flesh,” which leprosy pictures, a believer needs to deal with that particular sin. This is also the emphasis of the trespass offering. Fur-

thermore, leprosy among God’s people was an offense against His honor and an injury to His testimony just as with outbreaks of sin in His people today. The trespass offering looked primarily to these offenses.

The priest then slays the lamb as the trespass offering. Its flesh goes to him for food and as a symbol by which he bears the guilt involved. The collected blood will be used in an anointing no regular Israelite ever had, not even a judge or king. Only a consecrated priest and a healed leper had this anointing.

As the man stands between the altar and the tabernacle door, the priest places blood on his right earlobe, right thumb, and right big toe. Instead of being marked by leprosy, he is marked by the blood of the slain lamb.

**No longer is he to be driven** ever farther from God and his fellow men by each new outbreak of raw flesh. The blood of the sacrifice stands guard over his life.

Then the priest pours some of the oil into the palm of his left hand, dips his right forefinger in it, and sprinkles it seven times before the Lord. All his actions are under the sovereign will of God and to His glory.

Next he applies the oil on the former leper’s earlobe, thumb and big toe over the blood of the trespass offering. The priest then pours the oil left in his palm on the man’s head to complete the anointing. From this point, he is to be a spiritual man, responding to the Holy Spirit’s leading and encouragement.

**The three remaining regular offerings** complete the cleansing. The ewe lamb for a sin offering deals with

sin in general. The second male lamb is offered as a burnt offering. The offerer has acceptance with God as the whole voluntary sacrifice rises to God on the altar fire as a sweet savor, with an offering of fine flour that symbolizes Christ's even textured obedience to God and with oil that symbolizes the Spirit's presence and work.

If the leper cannot afford the full array of offerings, he may substitute two turtledoves or two young pigeons for the sin and burnt offerings and reduce the grain offering by two-thirds. But a male lamb must still be brought for the trespass offering. Leprosy and the sin it pictures dishonor God and injure His testimony. Its importance must not be downplayed.

**The final part of the chapter** (verses 33-57) looks to the time when Israel occupies Canaan and lives in permanent houses. If a house develops a leprosy-like mildew, it calls for priestly diagnosis.

The priest again uses the criteria of whether the growth is spreading and goes below the surface. A week's quarantine determines if it is spreading. If the tests are positive, the affected stones are removed and thrown in a segregated dump. The

whole interior is scraped, new stone installed and the house replastered.

If the disease reappears, the whole house must be torn down. But if the repairs succeed, the priest pronounces the house clean. Again, he calls for two birds along with cedar, hyssop and scarlet yarn for sprinkling and a bowl with spring water.

The priest kills the first bird in the bowl over the spring water, dips the live bird and the sprinkling brush in the blood and sprinkles the house seven times. He then goes to the edge of town and lets the blood-marked bird go free.

**Happy is the family** whose home is sprinkled by the atoning blood and the living water and that is consciously united to the Living Lord. But more blessed is the individual who recognizes he was a leper, physically and spiritually, and who has been healed by the Sovereign God and brought to Him through the sacrificed and risen Lord.

This healed leper is a new man, clean from all the products of the old life and guarded by the blood of the offering. And he is made a spiritual man by the anointing oil over the blood and on his head. He is a man equipped for life for the Lord.

## Questions for Leviticus 16

1. What event provides a background for the yearly service when the Holy of Holies could be entered?
2. Why must Aaron put on unadorned, pure linen garments to enter the Holy of Holies?
3. Why were there goats rather than bullocks as a sin offering for the people?
4. Why was incense burned in the Holy of Holies?
5. What is the significance of Aaron's sprinkling the mercy seat only on the east side (verse 14)?

- 6.. What does Exodus 30:10 indicate about Aaron's action in the "tent of meeting," the large courtyard of the tabernacle (verse 16)?
7. What truth of God's salvation is pictured in verse 17?
8. What is the relation of the live goat to the one sacrificed? How did this picture John the Baptist's introduction of Christ in John 1:29?
9. What unchanging principles of God's character can be seen in this service?



# The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16

**The work of Israel's high priest on Yom Kippur looks forward to Christ's atoning sacrifice by which believers can come boldly before God.**

Too important to be given just a brief mention in the roll of "the appointed times of the Lord" in Leviticus 23, Yom Kippur has the entire 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Leviticus devoted to its detailed instructions.

Yom Kippur is unique among the appointed times. While the others are feasts, this is a fast—a strict "Sabbath" on which no work is done under pain of expulsion from Israel. It is the one day of the year when the high priest enters the holy of holies and makes atonement for the sins of all Israel.

The restrictions for entrance into the most holy place recall the sacrilege and instant judgment of Aaron's two older sons who attempted to make an unauthorized offering of incense with "strange fire" (10:1, 2).

**Now the acceptable approach** into God's presence is fully described: its day, its sacred details and its glorious result. Israel's sin is taken away so God may continue to dwell among the people.

Falling on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement is the high point of the fall convocations, which include the Feast of Trumpets on the first day and Tabernacles from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is to the fall's feasts what Passover is to the spring's.

**The primary attention** is on the high priest. It is Aaron who is to make the offerings and enter the awesome presence of God in the cloud above the mercy seat. He is to bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering for himself and his family (verse 3). Then, in the holy place, he lays aside his ornate priestly garments (verse 4). There can be no show of man's glory before God, even the glory of an office ordained by God.

Aaron now bathes and puts on unornamented, pure linen clothing and turban. Moses adds that "these are holy garments" (verse 4). Symbolically reflecting the character of God, they are suitable for His presence. Aaron then receives the offerings for the people: two male goats for the sin offering and a ram for the burnt offering (verse 5). As the bullock for his own sin offering is being prepared for presentation at the tabernacle door, Aaron turns to the two goats (verses 7-10).

**He casts lots** to determine which is to be sacrificed and which is to be the scapegoat sent away into the wilderness, symbolically bearing Israel's sins. After he has determined their roles, Aaron presents the two goats before the Lord.

In verse 11, Aaron sacrifices his

bullock. The fuller wording here than in verse 6 may indicate that Aaron was to lay his hand on the head of the sacrifice in the regular symbolic gesture of identification before it was slain. After collecting the bullock's blood, he is ready to enter the holy of holies.

**Into the awesome presence** of God he is to take not only the blood of the offering but also a golden censer full of live coals from the altar of sacrifice and two handfuls of incense (verse 12). There must be a shield between him and the intense brightness of the glory over the mercy seat. No man can look on that glory unveiled and live (verse 13).

Aaron is alone; no one is with him in the tabernacle, nor can anyone help him. He accurately pictures the ultimate High Priest, who would be completely alone as He did the full work of salvation.

As Aaron stood ready to enter the holy of holies, he may have drawn aside the veil enough to place the censer inside, poured the incense on the coals and paused a moment to let the incense rise before he entered with the atoning blood. As incense fills the small room, he advances to the ark on its near, east side. Dipping his finger in the blood of his offering, Aaron carefully sprinkles the near edge of the mercy seat (verse 14).

There is no presumption, no grand sweep of his hand over "the atonement cover" (NIV), no irreverent attempt to explore what might be felt around the rims or toward the center of the seat. This is dealing with the God of absolute holiness. Finally, Aaron sprinkles the blood on the ground in front of the ark seven

times.

**The atoning blood** is now perfectly before the Lord. It is probably this picture—the mercy seat holding the atoning blood before God—that led the apostle Paul to speak of Christ crucified as a "propitiation" whom God had "displayed publicly" to promote saving faith (Romans 3:25).

Israel's sin not only has been an offense against God and His holiness, but also has brought uncleanness on the tabernacle and the altar. The sprinkling of blood has now cleansed the Holy of Holies. As Aaron withdraws from God's presence, he sets about the rest of the cleansing.

**In the outer sanctuary**, he sprinkles the golden altar of incense. In Exodus, God commanded Aaron to sprinkle the horns of the altar once a year with the blood of the sin offering (30:10). Aaron may also have included the table of showbread and the golden lampstand in this cleansing. Today, we also need to be concerned that our ministry of the Bread of Life and the light of Christ, as well as the incense of our worship, is clean and in alignment with God's character.

The annual cleansing of the tabernacle and its furnishings is complete as Aaron sprinkles the great brazen altar in the courtyard. He applies blood to the altar's horns, which signify its power, and sprinkles it seven times on the altar itself. Its acceptability to God depends on its being cleansed from man's sin and brought into conformity with God's character. It was subject to being detailed particularly in areas of religious ceremony, such as hypocrisy,

pride and self-promotion.

**Today we have the infinite,** once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Calvary. Our ministry of the “altar” is both as a memorial to the Savior and in proclaiming His message of salvation by faith. Such a ministry calls for frequent spiritual cleansing.

According to verse 18, the blood for cleansing the brazen altar combined the blood of the sacrifice for Aaron and the sacrifice for the people. This suggests that today leaders and laity have a unified responsibility for the spiritual condition of the Lord’s ministry.

**After Aaron** cleanses the brazen altar, he turns to the second goat. Like the two birds of the leper’s cleansing (Leviticus 14:4-7), the two goats form one offering. In both cases, one animal is slain as a sacrifice for sin and its blood sprinkled in cleansing application. As the leper is pronounced clean, the live bird is marked by the atoning blood and is released to soar away, picturing Christ “raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25).

Like the bird, the live goat carries away the result of the first’s sacrifice for sin. This is the complete “taking away” of sin that John the Baptist cites when he introduces Christ to Israel: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The details are important. Aaron first presents the goat before the Lord. Then with the congregation watching and listening, he lays his hands on the goat’s head and confesses over it all of Israel’s iniquities and all its transgressions of every category, laying them on the goat (Le-

viticus 16:21).

**It becomes the “scapegoat”** and is led away “to a solitary land” by a man prepared for the task. Bearing Israel’s sin, it is taken to the remotest part of the desert and left there, never to be encountered again.

It perfectly symbolizes the Baptist’s words, as well as the psalmist’s “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). In later years, the scapegoat was taken to a remote cliff above the Dead Sea and pushed over backward.

With the scapegoat on its way to the wilderness, Aaron re-enters the tabernacle. He takes off the linen garments he had put on to enter the Lord’s presence, bathes again and puts on his regular garments of honor (16:23, 24). He leaves the linen clothing in the tabernacle to be cared for as especially holy.

Aaron now goes to the brazen altar to offer both rams as whole burnt offerings, one for himself and his family and one for the people.

**Each is slain** and its inner fat laid on the altar for a quick flame. Then the flesh is cut into pieces and laid carefully on the altar to receive the flame and rise to God as a sweet savor. Now the inner fat of the two sin offerings, whose blood had been taken into the Holy of Holies, is added to the portrayal of Christ’s inward zeal for God (verse 25).

Through this annual slain sacrifice and its aroma rising to God, Israel has atonement and acceptance as we have it permanently and in perfection through the cross.

The phase of the drama of atonement has its climax as the scapegoat disappears over the ridge

toward the depth of the desert. But the last phase gives Christians a deep assurance and a challenge.

The bodies of both sin offerings are taken outside the camp and burned (verse 27), picturing God's putting away in Christ's death the whole old thing we were by sin—our "old self" (Romans 6:6).

**The man who burns** the two offerings, which represent sin at its root, becomes defiled. He may not enter the newly cleansed camp until he washes his clothes and bathes (verse 28). Likewise, the man who leads the scapegoat away into the wilderness has touched sin. When he returns, he is ceremonially unclean and must wash his clothes and himself before he re-enters the camp.

For the people of Israel, this is also the most solemn day of the year, a holy convocation. As many as possible observe the action, with at least one from each family being present.

They could see the high priest in his special garments take the blood, the censer of live coals and the incense and take his life in his hands as he enters the tabernacle to make atonement. They would also strain to hear as Aaron confesses their sins to God and lays them on the scapegoat. And they watch the goat and the man leading it until they disappear out of sight.

**There is nothing** in the ceremony's offerings for the priests to eat; all is burned on the altar or outside the camp. Clearly it is a fast day for the people. Nothing is allowed to break the solemnity of humbling their souls in confession, contrition and repentance in view of the atoning sacrifice (verse 31).

No one, whether native-born or sojourner, is to work at all this day. It pictures Paul's definition of faith: "To the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5).

Today, Jews observe the day largely out of respect for their traditions or because it is a "permanent statute" of the Torah (Leviticus 16:34). The devout may attend synagogue services and spend time in lengthy meditation, confession and prayer. But this can give little assurance of acceptance with God.

**Yom Kippur calls** for the blood of the sacrifice to be sprinkled on the mercy seat over the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. But these articles were lost in the Babylonian captivity, and there has been no temple in Jerusalem since it was destroyed in A. D. 70.

But for Christians, this chapter confirms some of the great, unchanging truths of God and challenges us to enter more fully into the privileges that are ours in Christ.

The attribute of God most strongly presented here is His awesome, absolute holiness. On pain of death, only the consecrated high priest—on the appointed day, in holy linen, with incense veiling the glory over the mercy seat and with the atoning blood in his hand—may approach Him. God's character is that of self-affirming purity.

**The need** for man's reverent obedience to God is also clearly shown. For ministry directly before God, Aaron put on pure, unadorned linen garments. There is no place for man's glory in the presence of God. And at the mercy seat, Aaron rever-

ently sprinkled just the near edge, lest he give any impression of invading the divine presence.

The Day of Atonement also illustrates the great abiding principle that man's acceptance with God rests on a substitutionary blood atonement. It is introduced early in Genesis (3:21), fully seen in the Passover (Exodus 12), fully declared in Isaiah (52:13-53:12), and wrought in eternal fact in the cross (Hebrews 9:11-14).

In Leviticus 16, we see it at every turn as the basis on which God forgives and puts away sin and thus dwells among His people.

**For a Christian**, the most encouraging thing to remember from this chapter is the change that has

taken place regarding entering into God's presence.

For Israel under the old covenant, only the high priest could enter, only once a year, and only with the cloud of incense and the blood of the sin offering. It was wonderful, but so restricted.

But when Christ made His infinite offering, the veil was rent from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50-51). The way into the Holiest is now freely open.

Every believer is urged to come boldly, not because the One there is less holy or less glorious, but because the blood on the mercy seat is that of "the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

### Questions for Leviticus 15 and 17-22

1. Both men and women have temporary and extended times of uncleanness. How is cleansing made for each (ch. 15)?
2. Why must all slaughtering be done at the tabernacle (ch. 17)? Is there a deeper spiritual purpose?
3. What one verse in chapter 17 is the Old Testament background of the gospel?
4. How wide an area of relationships are outlawed as incest (ch. 18)?
5. What similar types of conduct are condemned in 18:17-23? In verse 21, what constituted giving a child to Molech (see 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35)?
6. How many of the Ten Commandments are referred to in chapter 19? What verse does Christ say is the second greatest commandment (see Matthew 22:39)?
7. What does 20:14 tell us about the intent of the severity of these laws?
8. What defects in 21:14 have spiritual counterparts in a believer-priest today? Can they be overcome? How?
9. In chapter 22, on what basis might a servant in a priest's household eat of the holy things? Why might a sacrifice with an overgrown or stunted member be accepted for a freewill peace offering, but not for one fulfilling a vow (verse 23)?

# Laws for a Clean and Holy People

Leviticus 15 and 17-22

**In the midst of instructions for Israel's great feasts and celebrations, God gives additional regulations for living a life separated unto Him.**

Although the specific instructions in Leviticus 15 and 17-22 cover a broad range of topics, they share a common goal. In their daily lives, God's people are to live in a way that identifies them as a people set apart by God.

Leviticus 15 again shows God's concern for personal hygiene in His people. The chapter concerns bodily discharges, beginning with the more serious ones in men. These bring uncleanness on the person and what he lies on, sits on, or touches if he has not just washed his hands (verses 2-12).

**When the man** is healed, he is to allow a week for cleansing and then he must offer two birds: one for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering (verses 13-15). As always, cleansing comes by the atoning blood. A momentary discharge, such as a seminal emission, calls for the man to bathe and be considered unclean until evening.

A woman's regular menstrual period was counted a minor discharge. Those having contact with her are rendered unclean until evening, and the woman is considered unclean for seven days (verses 19-24). But if the discharge is prolonged or becomes ir-

regular, it is considered a major uncleanness. When cured, she is to take a week for cleansing and offer two birds on the eighth day to complete the restoration (verses 25-30).

**These regulations run** parallel with Christ's statement, "The things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man" (Mark 7:15). There is within each Christian the old sin nature. Whenever its "discharge" pollutes us and affects others, we can appropriate the finished atonement and cleansing of the cross.

The laws concerning slaughtering in chapter 17 are significant for the theology of the Old Testament. Their immediate purpose is to restrict the slaughter of clean animals to the area in front of the tabernacle—the place where sacrifices are also slain.

God is dwelling among His people. He seeks to prevent any concealed idolatry, and also He wishes to share in His people's joyous feasts. They enjoy the animal's meat, while the blood and inner fat belong to God and must never be eaten. The meal becomes a peace offering, and all participants lift their hearts to the Lord. Today, we should remember that God still desires to share our joy.

**The emphasis of the chapter** is the sanctity of the blood. The key statement, verse 11, begins with the physical basis: “The life of the flesh is in the blood.” By bringing nutrients and oxygen to the cells, the blood enables both our mental and physical activity. And because the blood also removes the cells’ waste materials, internal physical cleansing is certainly also “by the blood.”

God then declares His principle of redemption: “I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.” Death is the required payment for sin. But God, in grace, provided a sacrificial substitute as a picture and token of the Lord Jesus Christ’s infinite sacrifice.

**So for all Israel** and the foreigners among them, there is to be no eating of blood. If a hunter kills a clean animal, he must drain its blood and cover it with earth before cooking and eating the animal (17:13). If someone eats an animal found dead or torn by other beasts, he must wash his clothes and bathe. He is unclean until evening because there may have been blood left in the carcass (verse 15). If he does not wash, he may be expelled from Israel (verse 16).

Chapter 18 presents a sample of God’s unquestioned moral standards. The chapter begins with a solemn preamble warning the people of Israel that they cannot follow the immorality of the Egyptians or of the Canaanites into whose land He is about to bring them.

**The following 13 verses prohibit** incest. Its definition takes in

blood relatives, beginning with a man’s mother and extending to his grand-daughter and a son’s wife. An aunt by marriage is included in the prohibition because she and her husband are one. Verse 17 prohibits marrying the daughter or other close female relative of one’s wife. (By marriage, a man is one with his wife, so these others are now blood relatives.) Verse 18 prohibits marrying the sister of one’s wife “as a rival” while his wife is living.

With verse 19, the prohibitions move to a wider scope, calling for consideration of a woman’s monthly period, restating the crime of adultery and warning against making children pass through the fire of the pagan god Molech. Such heartless cruelty profanes God’s name.

**Far from calling homosexuality** an “alternative lifestyle,” verse 22 forbids it as an abomination. And the final verse of this section forbids sexual perversions with an animal. Mesopotamian and Egyptian mythology told of their gods’ engaging in such practices. But to Jehovah, this is the most base of perversions.

Verses 24-28 summarize the chapter. Because the Canaanites were guilty of all these practices, they were under the judgment of God. If the land is about to spew out the Canaanites for defiling it, it will do the same if Israel becomes apostate. Christians today must hold absolutely to the standards of morality or their testimony will be gone.

Chapter 19 gives a wide range of laws for daily life. Strongly related to the Ten Commandments, they are enforced 11 times by the expression “I am the Lord” or by an amplified

form of it. It begins with a call to honor one's mother and father (a reverse order from the commandment of Exodus 20:12) and to observe the Sabbath. Next comes a warning against idolatry, with molten idols in particular (19:4).

**Hospitality to poor neighbors** is promoted by the prohibition of eating any part of a peace offering after the second day (verses 5-8). Concern for the needy is also expressed by the order to allow the poor and strangers to glean fields and vineyards (verse 10). The call for right treatment of one's neighbors follows, with a reminder that a false oath in God's name profanes His name (verses 11-13).

Next come examples of a righteous attitude toward one's neighbor. These are summed up in verse 18 in the command Christ declared the second greatest: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

In verse 19, mixing breeds, seeds and material for clothing is condemned. When God has given the right breed of cattle, strain of wheat or the perfect linen, don't mix in the Canaanite strains. More important, spiritual food and raiment are not to be mixed with those of Baal, Astarte or Molech (or their heirs today).

**The death penalty for immorality** is withheld in the case of a slave woman; she does not have freedom of choice. But the man involved must bring a heavy guilt offering (19:20-22).

Fruit trees planted in the land must not be harvested for the first three years, and the fruit of the fourth year is to be presented as an offering to God. After that, the owner

may eat of the harvest (verses 23-25).

Again it is emphasized that no blood is to be eaten. Furthermore, divination, soothsaying and spiritism are not to be touched (verses 26, 31). Because Israel's honor is for the Lord, no special cutting of sideburns or beard in honor of pagan gods, cuttings in the flesh for the dead or tattooing is allowed (verses 27, 28). To make one's daughter a prostitute profanes her and pushes the land into wickedness (verse 29). Instead, Israel is to keep the Lord's Sabbaths and revere His sanctuary.

**The final group of laws** begins with a call to respect the aged by rising at their approach. Strangers are to be treated as relatives and loved as oneself. Israel was an alien in Egypt and knows how it feels (verses 33, 34). Thus, strangers will learn of the true God.

The final entry in this catalog for a holy life is honesty in business: honest scales, weights and measurements. It was for holiness in every sphere of life that the Lord brought them out from Egypt.

**Salvation in Christ** has delivered us from even worse bondage. And the moral and spiritual standards of life in Christ are certainly not lower than those of Moses, nor are the incentives for obedience weaker than the law's.

Chapter 20 lays down the punishment for serious sins already condemned. Causing one's child to pass through the fire to Molech—the most atrocious idolatry—merited death by stoning (verse 2). The person had defiled God's sanctuary and profaned His name. If the people disregard the offender, God Himself promises to



step in and execute the penalty on the man, his family and others who go along with him (verses 2, 3). God will also cut off from His people anyone who resorts to a medium or a spiritist (verse 6). And the medium is to be stoned (verse 27).

In view of these punishments, the people are to consecrate themselves to holiness and faithful practice of God's statutes (verses 7, 8). The concluding statement, "I am the Lord who sanctifies you," is an Old Testament parallel of "It is God who is at work in you," which follows the command to "work out your salvation" (Philippians 2:12, 13; see Hebrews 13:21).

**The penalty for cursing** a parent (from deep hatred, not a passing outburst of temper) is death, as it is for those guilty of adultery (verse 9). Incest between a man and his father's wife or his son's wife also brings the death penalty (verses 11, 12).

Homosexual practice is again declared detestable; the participants are to be put to death (verse 13). And if a man marries a woman and her mother, all three receive the death penalty (verse 14). God also imposes a death sentence for a man or woman who attempts sexual activity with an animal; even the animal is to be killed (verses 15, 16). Sexual immorality involving a sister, half-sister or a woman during her period calls for their being "cut off from among their people" (verses 17, 18). Incest with an uncle's or a brother's wife brings the penalty of childlessness (verses 20, 21).

**Chapter 20's final section** is again a warning and a call to holi-

ness. If Israel does not keep God's statutes, the land will spew them out as it is about to do with the Canaanites (verse 22). The land is God's gift, "flowing with milk and honey" (verse 24); but the vile Canaanites have done what God has condemned. As a people separated to the Lord, Israel is called to be distinguished from the unclean. They are to make themselves holy because God has "set you apart from the peoples to be Mine" (verse 26).

Although the punishments given in the chapter may seem extreme, for nearly 500 years with righteous leaders in Israel the deterrent was effective. Apparently there was little need to carry out the penalties.

**The decline came** with acts like Solomon's erecting an idol to Molech for one of his pagan wives (1 Kings 11:7). What Israelite would dare call for his stoning? As Christians with far higher spiritual privileges and provisions, spiritual leaders in the home and the church must also be resolute or decline is almost certain.

Chapters 21 and 22 speak of the priesthood. Because the New Testament shows that every believer is a priest (1 Peter 2:5,9), much from this section has application for us.

The Lord's word through Moses goes to the heart of priestly character and service; a priest is to be holy to the Lord, separated fully to Him and actively living for Him. As holy, the priest must avoid defilement.

Although contact with death defiles, when a death occurs in his family, it bids him to share in the mourning. A common priest may defile himself for the death of his father, mother, son, daughter, brother and

virgin sister (21:2, 3). It's implied he may do so for his wife, but he may not for one of her family (verse 4).

**Christ did not allow His natural family** to deflect Him from His course (Matthew 12:46-50). But during His suffering on the cross, He provided for His mother's future care (John 19:26). And as Christians, the dead thing that causes our most serious defilement is our "old self" (Romans 6:6).

As holy, the priest is separated from what is contrary to God. Marks of loyalty to an idol, such as artificial baldness, shaving off the edges of his beard and cutting his flesh have no place in a man of God (verse 5).

The priest may not marry a former prostitute or a divorcee (verse 7). And if a priest's daughter falls into prostitution, she defiles the Lord's name as well as her father; her punishment is burning (verse 9).

**Because the high priest** is especially close to God, he not only cannot defile himself by approaching the body after the death of his mother or father. He also cannot leave the sanctuary, take off his turban or tear his garments in grief. The consecration of the anointing oil is to outweigh even the deepest natural emotion (verses 10-12). Furthermore, the high priest is to marry a virgin of unblemished character from his own tribe "that he may not profane his offspring among his people" (verse 15).

A priest must be without physical defect of any kind. If he is blind, lame, disfigured of face, deformed of limb or even has an abnormal look in his eye or eczema, he cannot serve in the tabernacle (verses 17-21). To present an offering to a holy God requires the symbol of physical perfec-

tion as well as symbolic righteousness by the offerings and the anointing. The person with a defect still receives his food from the offerings, but he cannot serve in the tabernacle (verses 22, 23).

**For us as believer-priests**, the good news is that we are "complete in Christ" by saving faith. And our spiritual defects can be cured by the Spirit's work in us through the Word and with our obedience.

Chapter 22 turns to the relation of the priest to the laws of cleanness. One who is unclean for any cause—from leprosy to having touched a dead animal that morning—must not under penalty of expulsion from his office receive or handle any gift for the Lord's service. And he may not eat of any of the gifts for the priests until he is again clean (verses 1-7).

No one outside the priestly family may eat of the priests' share of the offering. Although visitors or hired servants may not do so, one purchased as a permanent servant or born in the household may eat of the offering (verses 10, 11). As Christians, we are "in the family" both by purchase and by the new birth. A daughter who marries outside the priestly line surrenders her right; but, if she is widowed or divorced and has no children, she may return to her father's table (verses 12, 13).

**Anyone who mistakenly eats** of a holy gift must make restitution plus one-fifth (verse 14). The priest must not allow unauthorized eating by the offerer or others. Because it lowers God's honor, that offering should be repeated (verses 14-16). Similarly, those who give to the

Lord's work today should not expect personal gain from their gifts.

Verses 17-25 give the complete standards for sacrificial cattle, sheep and goats. Whether brought by an Israelite or by an alien in the land, the animal must be without defect. But for a peace offering, an ox or a lamb with a somewhat misproportioned member is acceptable as a freewill offering, but not to fulfill a vow. A vow requires the full perfection implied by its words. But because a freewill offering is beyond what is required, an animal is acceptable as long as it has no polluting defect.

**As we look to Christ** as our Sacrifice, we must realize that He is absolutely perfect. But even if our voluntary expression of love and praise lacks the perfection of Christ's character, it is still acceptable to Him.

The final section of this great array of laws (verses 26-33) calls for some measure of maturity in a sacrifice before it may be offered. Christ was 30 when He came to John for baptism as the Lamb of God and at least 33 at the cross. Presenting our bodies as living and holy sacrifices is aided by the maturity we gain "by the mercies of God" (Romans 12:1).

The chapter ends with a fourfold use of the refrain that is so frequent throughout this part of Leviticus: "I am the Lord." But to its third use is added the theme of Leviticus, "who sanctifies you," and the theme of Exodus, "who brought you out from the land of Egypt." Today we have just as great a need to hear the words of God who has called us to Himself and who has saved us from our sins.

### Questions for Leviticus 23:1-14

1. Verses 1-3 give laws for the Sabbath. At what point in the exodus was the Sabbath specifically confirmed for Israel? When was it made law?
2. How did Christ's attitude toward the Sabbath differ from that of the Pharisees (see Matthew 12:1-13)?
3. Compare the Lord's Day with the Jewish Sabbath (see Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10).
4. Review the Passover in Exodus 12.
5. What was the historical background of the Feast of Unleavened Bread?
6. In view of the symbolism of leaven, what is the spiritual teaching of the feast?
7. In what ways is the Passover the Old Testament's redemption?
8. When a feast lasts a week rather than a day or a few hours, what spiritual application is implied?
9. The Feast of First Fruits (verses 9-14) was the day after the Sabbath of the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, what was also taking place in the spring Christ died as the priests prepared to wave the sheaf of first ripe grain?
10. In 1 Corinthians 15, how does Paul use this feast?



# The Sabbath and the Spring Feasts

Leviticus 23:1-14

**There is a close relationship among the first three feasts of Leviticus 23:1-14. Each emphasizes one aspect of God's salvation.**

Leviticus 23 gathers up the sacred times on Israel's calendar. It begins in the spring, following the order God directed at the exodus. These times are often called feasts. But one is a strict fast; and, on the Sabbath, fires cannot be used to prepare meals. Virtually all involve "holy convocations" or assemblies as well as the presentation of additional offerings. Feasts lasting a week had convocations on the first and seventh days.

## The Sabbath

**The weekly Sabbath is presented** first and is in a class by itself (verses 2, 3). It was established by God's example, as He completed creation and rested the seventh day, blessing and hallowing it. Man is invited to share in God's rest in this divine provision for his well-being.

The Sabbath is not specifically mentioned in Genesis after 2:3, but it returned to the foreground when God began to give manna. On the sixth day, Israel was to gather a double portion with the assurance it would not spoil the next day. It would be a Sabbath when no one was to work and no manna would be given (Exo-

dus 16:4, 5, 22-27).

At Sinai, the Sabbath took its place in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11). The emphasis is on keeping it holy; no work at all is to be done. Israel is to find rest in recognition of God and obedience to Him.

**In Exodus 31**, as God gave the tables of stone to Moses, He established the Sabbath as a sign of His relation with Israel. The Sabbath is a continual reminder of their faith and loyalty. The penalty for profaning the day is death, and Numbers 15:32-36 describes a time it had to be carried out.

In Leviticus 23, the Sabbath is given its place as the weekly "appointed time" of the Lord. Fresh emphasis is placed on its being a "complete rest." And because it is "to the Lord," there is to be a "holy convocation" with a special offering (Numbers 28:9, 10) along with the continual burnt offering. There is also to be a blessing, probably prayer, and at times a message.

Christ came into sharp conflict with the Jewish leaders on their interpretation of Sabbath restrictions. He summarized: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27) and "The Son

of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28).

**The disciples recognized** the importance of the Resurrection—that Christ met with them that first day and again the next first day of the week and that Pentecost was also on the first day. Therefore, they began to hold their principal meeting with its communion of the bread and the cup on the first day.

In Revelation 1:10, John spoke of the Christian day of worship as “the Lord’s day.” In Greek the expression describes the day as not only belonging to the Lord, but also partaking of His character: “the Lordly day.”

While the Lord’s day is primarily in recognition of the Resurrection, much else commends it to us. It preserves God’s principle without the legalism of Sinai; and it proclaims Christianity as universal, not just a Jewish sect.

In the covenant of Sinai, the order was to work six days followed by a day of rest. But in the first day observance, Christ gives rest in His accomplished redemption and new life by the Spirit; and in this strength we go into the week’s work.

### Passover

**The seven feasts of Leviticus 23 fall into two basic groups** with three in early spring, three in early fall and Pentecost in between in late spring.

The first of the feasts is Passover (verses 4, 5). It falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of the religious year. Fully presented in Exodus 12, its treatment in Leviticus is brief. Here Moses simply gives it its place as first among God’s annual appointed

times.

The Passover celebration is a perpetual memorial of God’s deliverance from the judgment that fell on Egypt and from its bondage.

God’s redemption centered in the Passover lamb, a picture of “Christ our Passover.” The lamb was examined thoroughly to prove it was without defect. Then it was slain, and its blood was applied to the sides and top of the door so that the Angel of Death might see it and pass over that dwelling.

The lamb was roasted without adding any water. As in the cross, nothing is to lessen the heat of the fire. It is eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs that remind each family of the bondage left behind. And those who partake are to eat in haste, dressed for a journey. Today, those feeding on the Lamb and sheltered by the blood are to leave behind Egypt’s spiritual equivalent.

As a sacrifice, it most resembles the peace offering. And like the Lord’s Supper, which carries on from it spiritually, the Passover is distinctly memorial.

In contrast with the Day of Atonement’s strict fast, Passover is a feast; and its atmosphere is less somber. Rather than confessing sin and pleading an atonement, it celebrates deliverance.

### Unleavened Bread

**The second feast, that of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8), begins the following day** and is directly connected with the Passover. The entire eight-day period is often called “the Passover,” and at times the Passover is included in “the days

of unleavened bread” (Matthew 26:2; Luke 22:1).

The feast’s background lay in Israel’s haste to leave Egypt after the death angel had passed through the homes of the Egyptians. There was not time to waste, so the people took their dough before any yeast was added and packed their kneading bowls in their bundles of clothing (Exodus 12:34).

**Of itself**, the incident is hardly cause for a feast. God seeks to memorialize the departure from Egypt and its evil life, symbolized by leaven. Those delivered out of bondage must not take into their lives “the leaven of malice and wickedness” (1 Corinthians 5:8). The length of the feast indicates God’s purpose is to establish a principle for life, not just celebrate an event.

Described here briefly, the feast is detailed in Numbers 28:17-25. The seven days begin on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the first month with a holy convocation on the first and seventh days. No “laborious work” is to be done, only what is essential.

**At the convocation**, a special offering is presented. It consists of two bullocks, a ram, seven yearling lambs for a burnt sacrifice and a goat for a sin offering—all presented with a meal offering.

There is evidence that at the first convocation this “bread of the sacrifice” was eaten in a place of honor before the congregation by those acknowledged as “princes of Israel.”

The spring Christ died, this convocation fell on the day He was crucified. Some suggest it was this honor of eating as princes that the Jewish leaders did not want to miss because

of defilement from entering Pilate’s judgment hall (John 18:28). Such uncleanness would last through the day, barring them from eating as princes. But it would end at sundown, permitting them to eat the regular evening Passover supper.

The same offerings, with the inclusion of a drink offering of joy, are made each day of the feast.

**Leaven, carefully cleaned** from every tent and house, is kept out just as carefully for all seven days. For a full week each year, Israel has before it the message that God’s people must put evil conduct out of their lives.

In each day’s offering they are to see the need for atonement for sin (pictured by the goat) and a tenfold emphasis on complete devotion to God (pictured by the whole burnt offerings).

As Christians, we have the spiritual reality of Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us, to urge and enable us both to get rid of the old “leaven of malice and wickedness” and also to feed on the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8).

### First Fruits

**The first day** of the week after the seven days of Unleavened Bread is the Feast of First Fruits (Leviticus 23:9-14).

God’s preamble to this statute was an encouragement for Israel’s desert years. It indicated He would bring them through the desert into the fruitful land He promised.

On the day after the Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread, Israel is to bring to the priest a sheaf of its first-ripe grain. The priest then

waves the sheaf before the Lord. This acknowledges and gives thanks to God for giving a bountiful crop—raising to abundant life the grain that had been planted in death. Waving the sheaf as evidence of this new life honors God and encourages Israel's faith.

After David established Jerusalem as his capital, Israel began to use an area in the Kidron Valley as its source for the sheaf of first fruits. Because of the way the sun struck that area, its barley ripened as early as any in Judea. So the moment the sun set on the Sabbath after Passover, three men with sickles hurried down to the Kidron to cut the grain to be waved before the Lord the next morning.

**The sheaf is to be presented** before the Lord because all first fruits belonged to Him. Israel is not to cut any other grain until the sheaf is waved. But this presentation also speaks to the people as a guarantee and sample of the coming harvest.

We too have this guarantee in Christ's rising from the dead. He is "the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The order is: "Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23). Christ risen guarantees our resurrection, for He said, "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19). And because we are united with Him in His resurrection, He guarantees our present resurrection life spiritually.

**In Paul's defense** before Agrippa, he gives the widest understanding of Christ as the first fruits: "By reason of His resurrection from

the dead, He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23).

As the wave sheaf is brought before the Lord, a perfect yearling lamb is to be offered as a burnt sacrifice (Leviticus 23:12). This reminds Israel that acceptance with God, implied in His gift of the harvest, is primarily based on the death of the sacrifice. A meal offering (picturing the fine-textured obedience of Christ's life) and a drink offering (picturing the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and the joy of the Lord) complete the observance (verse 13).

Compare Leviticus 23's directions for presenting the first fruits with the accounts of Christ's last week of ministry and His resurrection. Early in the morning after the Sabbath that followed the cross, the temple priests were preparing to offer the wave sheaf of the first fruits.

**But outside the city wall**, near an empty tomb, stood the Infinite First Fruits from the dead, revealing Himself alive to Mary Magdalene and sending word to the disciples of His triumph (John 20:11-17). He may have said, "Stop clinging to Me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (verse 17) in part because He needed first to wave the true first fruits before the throne.

These first three feasts not only are close in time but also present closely associated truths of God's salvation.

Passover declares deliverance from judgment and bondage by the blood of the Lamb. The days of Unleavened Bread speak of a life for God's people free from "the leaven of



malice and wickedness.” And First Fruits points to the source of the new life, the risen Son of God in whom we must believe if we are to be saved (Romans 10:9).

### Questions for Leviticus 23:15-44

1. What two names are given the feast described in verses 15-22? How is it related to the harvest?
2. How do the ritual and spiritual significance of this feast compare with that of First Fruits?
3. Why is leaven used in this feast?
4. Note the dates of the last three feasts (verses 23-44). What does Trumpets correspond with on the secular calendar?
5. What would trumpet calls naturally suggest? What meanings do you find for this feast?
6. Review the description of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 15. What aspects of it are specially emphasized in Leviticus 23:26-32?
7. What is the blessing celebrated in the feast of Booths (verses 33-44)?
8. If the spring feasts present the great aspects of salvation, what do the fall feasts emphasize?

# Pentecost and the Fall Feasts

Leviticus 23:15-44

**The convocations of Leviticus 23:15-44 not only observe God's present work in providing for his people but also anticipate a glorious future.**

The first three feasts in Leviticus 23:1-14 represent salvation—as redemption from bondage and judgment, a life free from the leaven of sin and a guarantee of our resurrection in the first fruits.

These final three feasts present aspects of the sabbatic rest of full assurance—His trumpet call awaking us to trust Him and to enter His future, His assurance of forgiveness in the atoning sacrifice and His assurance that He will bring us to our inheritance. Between the two groups at Pentecost is the anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who by His power and ministry baptizes individuals into one spiritual body for witness in the world.

## Pentecost

**The middle feast of Israel's sacred observances**, commonly called Pentecost, is set seven weeks after First Fruits and four months before the next feast. The name is from the Greek word for fiftieth; the feast is on the 50th day after the waving of the first-ripe grain. Its other name is Feast of Weeks. Exodus 23:16 calls it the Feast of the Harvest, but there are other harvests later in the year,

especially the summer's grape harvest. Pentecost is the feast of the grain harvest.

**The expression "first fruits to the Lord"** is also used of this offering (verse 17). Now that the wheat harvest is complete and the grain ready for use, it is fitting that the Giver of this full harvest be acknowledged in thanks and worship. The portion presented is not barely ripe stalks, but one-fifth of a bushel—finely ground into flour and baked into two loaves—offered to God as the center of a great celebration.

A holy convocation is called with all regular work suspended. Eventually this became one of the three feasts every Israelite man was expected to attend even though living in a foreign country. This practice accounts for the large number of Jews from abroad present for Pentecost in Acts 2.

There is a full array of the great offerings for all Israel: Seven yearling male lambs, a bull and two rams with accompanying meal and drink offerings make up the whole burnt offering, giving its pleasing aroma to God and acceptance for Israel (verse 18). This ultimately speaks of Christ's giving Himself as a sacrifice

wholly to God on the cross.

**A goat is offered** as the usual sacrifice for the sins of the people (verse 19). It is slain and its blood sprinkled on the altar. There are also two lambs for a peace offering. This is probably a token offering because all could not eat together in the tabernacle. Seemingly those lambs are given to the priest for his own use.

**At the convocation's climax,** the two loaves and two lambs are waved in honor and thanksgiving before the Lord (verse 20). He has brought the grain to full ripeness as promised in the sheaf 50 days before. Now it can be ground to fine flour and baked in generous loaves, as witnessed by the two. Two is the standard number for witness in Old Testament legal procedure (Deuteronomy 19:15).

This celebration sets before us a striking prophetic picture. In Acts 2, “the Day of Pentecost had fully come” (verse 1, NKJV)—the 50<sup>th</sup> day since “Christ ... the first fruits of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20 NASB) had risen from the dead.” In a large upper room in Jerusalem, in obedience to Christ’s promise of spiritual power (Acts 1:4, 5), were 120 men and women who had received the new life.

**Like the grain** on the stalks in the sheaf of first fruits, they were distinctly individual, lacking a body’s cohesion and power. But when the Spirit was given them that day in permanent residence and power, He “baptized (them) into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). The empowered witness of which Christ spoke (Acts 1:8) began immediately with 3,000 added to the body that day (Acts

2:41). With his strong Jewish consciousness, James speaks of the church as “a kind of firstfruits of all He created” (James 1:18 NIV).

There is at Pentecost, however, one element that may seem improper. Amid all the animals to be offered—the lambs, rams, bulls and even the goat—there must be no mark of imperfection. Yet the object of the ceremony, the wave loaf, is baked with leaven. This is no mistake. While the sacrifices look to the spotless Lamb of Calvary, the wave loaf looks to the church. The members of the body are perfect before God in the righteousness of their Head, but in their experience they all too often fall short.

The inclusion of leaven is of God’s grace. When we find we have failed, we should not despair but turn to our Advocate for intercession and claim the Spirit’s renewing work. The leaven is also there so a believer will not refuse fellowship with a local expression of the body of Christ because it is not perfect in every detail. The Holy Spirit has already put this hesitant believer into one body with these other believers.

**Because Pentecost is a harvest feast,** this passage is a logical place to remind Israel that the gleaning of the fields and reaping of the corners are to be left for the poor and the strangers (verse 22).

The following three “appointed times” form a group within the first three weeks of the seventh month. Like the group in the first month, there are two single special days and one full-week celebration.

The seventh month is expected to be a kind of Sabbath month. Besides the regular weekly Sabbath, there are

five special days with convocations when no regular work may be done. Special offerings are made on all 10 days of the three feasts. Throughout the period, there is the great message of “rest:” assurance toward God.

### Trumpets

**The fifth appointed time** is the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25). On the first day of the seventh month, it corresponds to the secular New Year’s Day.

It is to be free from laborious work, with a convocation at which an offering is made by fire to the Lord. Numbers 29:1-6 describes the sacrifices as a bull, a ram, seven yearling lambs for a burnt offering and a male goat for a sin offering. The large burnt offering stresses the honor to God of an obedience unto death and the offerer’s acceptance with God.

**The center of the feast, however,** is the blowing of trumpets. They were most frequently blown as signals (Numbers 10:1-9). One trumpet summoned the leaders to the tabernacle; two summoned all the people. A blast or alarm in case of an attack set the fighting men in array, beginning with the tribes on the east; a second blast summoned those on the south. And in the wilderness when the cloud had risen from the tabernacle, a trumpet set the tribes on the day’s journey.

There is also a prolonged blowing of trumpets, sounding them out over the sacrifices at a holy convocation. In Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 10:10, this blowing is called a “reminder” or “memorial.” It is a striking way to present the offerings to God and a means to bring to mind His

goodness and His promises and covenants, which beginning with Abraham were established in the blood of sacrifices (Genesis 15).

**The trumpets also sound a call** for Israel to awake from the lethargy of a long hot summer. From early June to the end of September, Israel has no special occasion for refreshing its faith and spiritual vitality. The Feast of Trumpets is a call to prepare for entering the mind and heart into the awesome Day of Atonement and, in the following feast, into the joy of God’s having brought them through the wilderness years and into their inheritance.

**For Israel, the prophetic aspect** of the Feast of Trumpets is that God has a future for His people. There were to be spiritual awakenings after periods of dryness under Samuel, David, and the other early prophets; Hezekiah, Isaiah and their contemporary writing prophets; Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah; and the Maccabees. But the final and full awakening will be when Israel “will look on Me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10) and be ushered into their final full Day of Atonement.

For the church, the trumpets sounded in the Reformation’s restoration of the gospel, in the Whitefield-Wesley revival and, perhaps at the beginning of the last century, in the rise of Bible study and deep interest in the Second Coming.

### Day of Atonement

**The next appointed time** of the Lord, 10 days after Trumpets is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32). Detailed instructions

for it occupy all of Leviticus 16 (which see).

Yom Kippur's place at the center of the fall's three appointed times is in accord with its importance as the climax of the levitical year. The reference to "exactly the tenth day" in verse 27 and the note in verse 32 that self-denial is to begin at sundown emphasize this sense of precision.

The description in Leviticus 23 does not summarize chapter 16's instructions. That chapter traces the high priest's entering the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, sprinkling blood on the mercy seat, cleansing the tabernacle and altar, confessing Israel's sins and laying them on the scapegoat and then completing the sacrifices.

**The seven verses here** take up only the people's concerns and duties. For them, it is to be a Sabbath of complete rest. (As with Christ in the infinite atonement, the high priest does his work alone.) Three times in this brief section, God says there is to be no work; the stated penalty is death. This most emphatically portrays Romans 4:5: "To the one who does not work, but believes ... his faith is reckoned as righteousness."

Three times God also says Israel must "humble your souls" ("deny yourselves," NIV). This includes fasting but is intended to go much deeper. What is expected is conviction of sin and true sorrow—perhaps something of what Christ commanded in Matthew 16:24: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself." Failure to do this results in being "cut off from his people" (Leviti-

cus 23:29).

God is saying emphatically that the benefits of the Day of Atonement are not to the thoughtless, careless or unconvicted. But by entering into the offering of the sacrifice with a repentant heart, the Israelite receives the real Sabbath rest—the forgiveness of his sins.

## Booths

**The last of the appointed times** is the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles, KJV). Beginning the 15th of the month, it is a week when all Israel is to live in booths made of leafy tree limbs, willow branches and palm fronds (verses 39-44). God gave it as a time of refreshing and joy now that the crops are gathered in.

It is, however, more than a national camp-out. It is a feast "to the Lord" with offerings each day, rest from regular work and a holy convocation on the first and the eighth days.

Booths is also a teaching memorial to keep fresh before the people that God did more than deliver them from Egypt (the Passover). Despite delays caused by unbelief and disobedience, He had brought them through the desert of Sinai into the Promised Land and given it to them as a permanent inheritance. It is a week to ponder Moses' words; "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

**Israel's worship and thanksgiving** here center in the special burnt offerings each day. The number of sacrifices is larger than usual, but suitable for the joy of the feast.

The sacrifices on each of the

seven days are to include 14 yearling male lambs without defect and two rams, each with its meal offering and drink offering. The number of bulls, however, is different from the usual regular pattern (see Numbers 29:12-38). The first day's burnt offering is to have 13 bulls, with 12 on the second day, 11 on the third day, on down to 7 on the seventh day.

This may simply be a way to arrive at the perfect number on the seventh day. It has been suggested, however, that because the bulls bring a large appreciation of the burnt offering, the 13 come just short of the doubly high completeness of appreciation shown in the 14 more humble lambs. The number of bulls gradually decreases, as by a naturally lessening enthusiasm, to a still perfect seven.

**The second convocation** is on the eighth day, which regularly signifies a new beginning. Although equal to the first day in importance (John 7:37 calls it "the great day"), the burnt offering is down to one bull, one ram, and seven lambs, exactly as on the Day of Atonement. It may be that, on the day that speaks of a new beginning, the offering is reduced to predominantly one sacrifice to show that, in its fulfillment, the ultimate and true Sacrifice will be just One.

The form of the feast made it ideal as a joyful means of giving

thanks to God for His care through the desert years, His enabling the conquest and His gift of a good harvest. During Joshua's leadership, it functioned well as a memorial for adults and as instruction for the children. But after that, according to Nehemiah 8:17, it was generally dropped and only fully restored by Ezra and Nehemiah.

**The future aspect of the feast** is presented by the leading prophet of Ezra and Nehemiah's day—Zechariah. In his prophecy, he gives the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement in Israel's repentance when they "look on Me whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10). Then "a fountain will be opened to the house of David ... to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (13:1 NIV).

In his last chapter, Zechariah pictures the Lord's setting up His kingdom. The feast to which the surviving nations are commanded to come to worship the King in Jerusalem is the Feast of Tabernacles (14:16). Then even the bells of the horses will be engraved "Holy to the Lord" and every cooking pot in Jerusalem will be holy (verses 20, 21).

**For the Christian**, the future aspect will be more individual and spiritual. But it will be a "Sabbath rest" in the joy of His having brought us to our eternal inheritance to be with Him and like Him forever.

## Questions for Leviticus 24-27

1. In 24:2, what is the point of the words *clear*, *beaten* or *pressed* and *continually*? In verse 16, what is the significance of using just the word *Name* (KJV supplies "of the Lord")?
2. In 25:1-7, what things are to rest? From what does Israel rest? How are the people to eat?

3. In 25:8-28, how is a jubilee a "Sabbath of Sabbaths"? What is its central idea? When is it to begin?
4. What makes 26:32-39 so striking to us today?
5. From chapter 27, is it God's estimate of the value of those dedicated that determines their worth? What about spiritual value?

# Highlights of the Final Chapters

Leviticus 24-27

**A long with expanded directions for familiar topics, Leviticus 24-27 introduces a new role that finds its fulfillment in Christ: the Kinsman-Redeemer.**

Chapter 24 covers three subjects: The first two round out the provision for services in the tabernacle's holy place. First is the clear, pure olive oil to be provided for the lamps of the seven-branched golden lampstand (verses 2-4).

The olives are to be prime—ripe, but firm enough to be “beaten” to yield this pure symbol of the Holy Spirit. The light of the lampstand shines out particularly upon the table of showbread, picturing the light of Christ shining out by the work of the Spirit. Today, if the light of Christ is to shine forth in full clarity and power, believers have the responsibility to be exercised in prayer and godly concern.

**As high priest,** Aaron had the responsibility of keeping the lamps in order by trimming the wicks and bringing the oil up to the proper level evening and morning. Our High Priest will do the same if we give Him the opportunity “evening and morning.”

Second is the provision made in verses 5-9 for the bread of the Presence or showbread on the golden table opposite the lampstand. Each of the “cakes” is baked from about four

quarts of unleavened fine flour. There are 12 cakes, one for each tribe so all are equally before the Lord.

**When the bread was changed** each Sabbath, frankincense was placed with the bread on the table and burned as a “memorial.” The incense became a fragrance to God, and the bread became sacred food for the priest. As a whole, it is a covenant memorial between God and Israel looking to the Messiah as the true Bread of Life.

In John 6:32, 33, Christ spoke primarily of the manna, the bread from heaven that gives life to the world. In the bread of the Presence, the emphasis is on Christ as the life sustainer.

The last part of the chapter tells of the son of an Egyptian man and an Israelite woman who in the course of a fight in the camp blasphemed God's name and cursed (verses 10-23). He was held while Moses and the people inquired the Lord's will.

God directed that he be taken outside the camp. Those who heard him blaspheme were to lay their hands on his head, and the people were to stone him to death. God is holy and His name sacred; the Third



Commandment settles that. The law is law even for one born of an Egyptian father.

**In the Hebrew**, verses 11 and 16 state, “the Name” had been blasphemed. In the inspired thought of Scripture, the “Name”—either the sacred name commonly pronounced “Jehovah” or an ideal union of all His names—is equivalent to Deity revealed. It approximates in a less personal way what Christ was infinitely and personally. (Read Psalm 138:2 in a recent translation for the relation of “Name” to the “Word” of God.)

Chapter 25 turns back to complete what might be called the Sabbath series. Chapter 23 began with the Sabbath of days—the seventh day with its rest from labor. It ended with the sabbatic month with its rest from the pressure of harvest and with the spiritual rest of assurance from God.

**Next is the sabbatic year**, a period of rest primarily for the land (25:2-7). Every seventh year it is to lie fallow with no sowing or reaping. Similarly, the vines are not to be pruned.

Grain from kernels that accidentally dropped and grew are not to be harvested, but left for the poor, cattle and wild game. Verse 6 shows that the family may use these crops if needed. But the usual way of living in the sabbatic year is that God will give so fine a harvest the sixth year that there will be plenty to meet their need until the harvest of the eighth year (verses 20, 21).

God would let the land enjoy its rest and so produce better crops the six regular years. But He would also have the people rest from the drive to make money and learn to trust Him

for provision for the extra year. In this way they are free to pour out their souls in devotion to Him as their priority of life, making the year truly “for the Lord.”

Israel eventually dropped this observance. In 2 Chronicles 36:21 God declared that in the Babylonian captivity, the land enjoyed its Sabbath: “All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.”

**The series climaxes** with the year of jubilee, the Sabbath of sabbatic years (25:8-55). This 50th year began on the Day of Atonement of the 49th year because all the blessings of jubilee are based on its atoning sacrifice. That day the high priest takes the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkles it on the mercy seat in the presence of God in His glory. Then the sins of Israel are confessed, laid on the scapegoat and taken away. Israel is ceremonially right with God.

**The great activity of the jubilee** is the restoration of what has been lost. If an Israelite has lost or had to sell any of his inherited property, at jubilee it is restored to him. God has given him a fresh start.

If he has become a bond-servant through inability to pay a debt, at jubilee the debt is canceled. He is a free man again—free to return to his family, to work for himself and to order his own life. Loans and purchases of inherited property are to be made on this understanding; it would be foolish to pay a high price when jubilee is near. Yet spiritually, this is often done.

Jubilee is a period of deep joy for those who had suffered loss and now rejoiced in recovery. It is also a sec-

ond sabbatic year for all Israel. For a second year, there would be no planting or harvesting and no pruning or regular harvest of the grapes. God would give in the 48<sup>th</sup> year an especially good harvest and “volunteer” grain and grapes for those with nothing stored up.

**It is a special test** of faith and a time of rest from pressure to “get gain.” As well, it is a time for meditation and sharing in the rejoicing of those restored to freedom or inheritances. Twice in a brief passage God warns, “You shall not wrong one another” (25:14, 17). The motivation is that “you shall fear (reverence) your God; for I am the Lord your God” (verse 17).

Prophetically, the jubilee looks to the consummation when, transformed by looking on the One “whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10), Israel will be cleansed and united with her Messiah-King. In true jubilee style, Israel will be released from all the effects of sin and failure. Associated with Him, they will have their part in the millennial kingdom and in “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

**Six brief sections** on details concerning the jubilee complete the chapter. Israel is to carry out God’s statutes so He will give abundant crops (25:18-22). If they do not sow and harvest, God assures them He will give a crop in the sixth year adequate for three years (through the sabbatic years and jubilee). It is a question of trusting God.

Verses 23-28 present the kinsman-redeemer buying back the property his impoverished relative sold, especially if the sale had been to a

non-Israelite. The redeemer would be the nearest of kin who was financially able. If no kinsman volunteers but the original owner recovers financially, he may redeem himself. The price is the amount originally paid, less the value for its use for the time since it was purchased. If no one redeems it, the property must wait until the year of jubilee to return to its original owner.

Verses 29-34 give an exception to the rule of redemption. If sold, a house in a walled city may be redeemed within one year. Otherwise it becomes the permanent possession of the new owner, unchanged by jubilee. But houses of Levites in cities assigned to them are always redeemable, and their pasture lands are never to be sold.

**A neighbor in need** is to be sustained by a loan without interest (verses 35-38). If someone sells him food, he is to take no profit on the sale. (Israel is also to do this for a stranger in need.) In this way, the neighbor may continue to live in the land; and the Lord who delivered Israel from Egypt will be honored.

Verses 39-46 describe the relationship an Israelite is to have with a fellow countryman who must sell himself into slavery to pay a debt. The Israelite creditor is not to treat him as a slave, but as a hired man and never with severity. Unlike slaves from other peoples, no Israelite slave is ever to be sold in a slave sale. At jubilee the debtor with his children goes out free to return to his family inheritance.

**The chapter’s final section** (verses 47-55) turns back to the kinsman redeemer. The situation is one heavy on Israel’s heart: an Israelite in slavery to a foreign creditor liv-

ing among them. The law gives the enslaved man the right to appeal for redemption to a brother, uncle, cousin or other blood relative. If one is willing to pay the price, the man can be fully freed. If not, he must serve until the jubilee.

The kinsman is assigned a third duty in Deuteronomy 25:5-9. If a married Israelite dies childless, his brother or other kinsman is to marry the widow and raise up a child to carry on the line of the deceased. If the nearest kinsman refuses, he comes before the elders with the widow and hands over his sandal in token of his failure to perform. The widow has the right to spit in his face to complete his disgrace. The right to redeem then passes to the next nearest of kin.

**We see this practiced** in the book of Ruth. It involved both a threatened inheritance and the death of Mahlon, Ruth's first husband.

Ruth knows Boaz enough to trust him with her future, and she risks repudiation and disgrace by putting herself at his feet. Boaz acknowledges, however, there is a closer relative. This relative was ready to redeem the property, but he was not willing to marry Ruth. So he handed over his sandal, and Boaz became the kinsman-redeemer.

**As Isaiah 59:20 declares** and Job 19:25 indicates, the kinsman-redeemer is a clear type of Christ. As incarnate, He is our kinsman (Hebrews 2:14, 15); and He came "to give His life a ransom (price to set a slave free) for many" (Matthew 20:28). And who else can deal with death (spiritual or physical) and make the open-hearted Gentile (as Ruth was also a Gentile) His bride? At Christ's return,

the kinsman-redeemer and jubilee will merge.

In chapter 26, Moses the prophet delivers God's message of blessing for faithful obedience and punishment for apostasy.

Verses 1-13 give the positive side: Bring in no idols, keep the Lord's Sabbaths and revere His sanctuary. If they obey, blessings will include rain in season, crops in abundance, peace and victorious power over enemies. Highest of all, God will multiply them, be their God and own them as His people.

Verse 14 begins the prophetic warning of what will result from apostasy. A series (verses 16, 18, 21, 23 and 27) depicts increasingly severe chastening. God's rods of chastisement progress through sudden terror, disease and invasion to drought, famine and sword. Punishment ends with siege so fierce that Israel will eat its own sons and daughters (verse 29). God will heap their remains on the remains of their idols (verse 30).

**Next is a striking prophecy** of the worldwide Jewish dispersion (verses 33-39). It stands as the climax of God's disciplinary judgments. Although it has elements applicable to the Babylonian exile, that deportation never included all the people, was not worldwide and did not have the savage treatment over this longer period. This points to the Roman conquest and total dispersion of the Jews in A.D. 70, followed by the pogroms and ghettos of Europe in the Middle Ages on down to Hitler.

The last section (verses 40-45) shows the power that has preserved this people through nearly 19 centuries of hatred and persecution. It is the Lord, the God of Abraham, who brought them

out of Egypt and gave them His covenant.

**Chapter 27 deals largely with evaluating** what has been dedicated to God or belongs to Him and is to be redeemed. First is the evaluation of what God counts valuable in people dedicated to Him (verses 2-8).

He looks for the qualities of maturity and active dependable strength. The highest value is for those 20 years to 60 years: 50 shekels for the male and 30 shekels for the female. Between 5 and 20 years, the value of the male is 20 shekels and the female, 10. Below five years, it is five and three shekels; beyond 60 years, it is 15 and 10.

The picture points to God's placing high value on the person of spiritual maturity and moral strength. The babe calls out one's love and the urge to care; but, if it does not grow, its chief effect is sorrow. The youth has greater value. A Samuel can begin to recognize God's voice, understand His ways and even gain the confidence of God's people.

**But the full value is in the spiritually strong** and mature. In spiritual value, many like Priscilla rate the full 50 shekels (Romans 16:3, 4). As for decline at 60, it is not an inevitable development in the spiritual realm; some are like Caleb at 85. Unfortunately, the decline can begin at any time. We all need to be alert to the danger and draw on the resources in Christ for continued strength.

The rest of the chapter (verses 9-24) may suggest some spiritual principles. A thing suitable for sacrifice and promised to God in a vow is holy. It is to be placed on the altar, not

shifted around according to one's changing ideas.

**A house**, whether symbolizing a family dedicated to the Lord or a church, is maintained at a real cost: a godly life by its leaders, consistent teaching of the Word, nights of fervent prayer and selfless love.

It is similar in the taking up of an area for planting seed. It is costly; but, if the price is not paid, it is turned over to others. Verse 25 reminds us that in all these things, the value is "after the shekel of the sanctuary." God's standard of value is not man's.

The Hebrew expression translated "devote" in verse 28 refers to the kind of irrevocable turning over to God what was to be done with the spoils of Jericho. This was disregarded by Achan, causing the shameful defeat at Ai and Achan's death.

**The final detail** is a reminder of the tithe as a legal requirement on all income of any kind (verses 30-33). This is in contrast to New Testament giving, which is voluntary and to be motivated by nothing less than our appreciation of the grace of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9).

# The Fullness of Time

**E**ternal God, unrestricted by time, acts within time and always on time in relation to the world. Nowhere is this more significant and clear than “when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” into the world as the promised Messiah.

**At that point, the Roman empire was at the zenith of its power,** unchallenged in authority. Peace was established from Britain to the borders of India. Citizens traveled freely, unrestricted by political barriers.

Roads reached throughout the empire and, except for winter, shipping served every port of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic from North Africa to Britain.

The ways were prepared for messengers of Christ to go to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Rome’s incorporation of distinct nationalities and regions into one empire reduced opposition to foreign religions.

**At that time, by his conquests and empire,** Alexander the Great had made Greek the dominant language of the eastern Mediterranean area, and it continued to spread after his death. By the birth of Christ it had become the most prominent language of the Roman world.

Even in Rome itself, Greek was the language of literature, philosophy, and culture for the educated people. It was understood in even the most remote areas of the empire.

**Not only was it a nearly universal language,** it was also as perfectly suited to an accurate presentation of the Christian message as any prominent language ever known. The variety of its verb forms enabled speakers and writers to be exact in regard to time and degree of certainty that proved remarkably advantageous in declaring the Gospel. Fine shades of meaning could be expressed by its wide vocabulary.

In the religious sphere, it had exactly the words and forms needed by Paul, Peter, Luke, and John to record the message perfectly. Into this language the Old Testament had been translated, so that by the time of Christ’s birth, the treasures of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms were available to the Greco-Roman world and, according to recent studies, were better known than we had formerly realized.

**Not only was the Greek language itself** a fine vehicle for disseminating the gospel of Christ, the whole culture of the Hellenistic world made people conscious of a wide range of philosophic and religious ideas that would be prominent in the apostolic message.

Greek philosophers had discussed origins, the nature of man, righteousness, graciousness, self-control, and similar matters.

Actually, the Apostle John’s great expression, “The Word,” by which he designated Christ as the full presentation of the mind and heart of God,

had been used in a somewhat similar way by Plato and made more familiar by the Alexandrian writer Philo.

John took a previously known but vague idea and made it specific, personal, and significant.

By the days of Paul, the idea of “salvation” had become prominent. The question of the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?” did not involve a concept unfamiliar to the Roman world at the time.

**At that point, throughout the Roman Empire,** a longing had begun in many hearts for something better than the decadence around them. The traditional gods of Greek and Roman mythology were subject to all the passions and failures that marked mankind. Their conduct was base.

Pagan religion was bankrupt.

Although Greek philosophy had risen to a high degree, particularly under Socrates and Plato, now even the philosophers were admitting—and some bewailing—that their philosophy had not been able to halt the moral decline.

The feeling of need for something to lift the level of life, to bring some kind of “salvation,” began to come into contact with ideas and passages from the Old Testament. Two results occurred:

**The Latin poet Virgil wrote his Fourth Eclogue.** It centers on a “puer” (its Greek equivalent in Acts 4:27, 30 is translated “boy” in the King James Version and “servant” in the New American Standard Bible) who was to come and deliver mankind from the dragon of evil and bring in a reign of righteousness and peace.

It so strongly reflects the Old Testament prophecies of a Servant-Deliverer that it is commonly referred to as Virgil’s Messianic Eclogue.

The second and more important result was the turning to the Jewish synagogue by large numbers of Gentiles throughout most of the Roman world.

**Disgusted with the stories of the gods** and the deification of the emperors and deeply concerned over the growing degeneracy around them, they could see only one place that offered a ray of hope—the place where Moses and the prophets were read, where the true God and righteous standards were proclaimed—the synagogue.

To realize how vastly important a preparation for Messiah this actually was, one need only remember that Paul, as he came to a new place in his missionary journeys, made the synagogue—wherever there was one—his first objective.

This was not just because the gospel was to be “to the Jew first,” it was also because in that synagogue he would find the potential “cream” of the Gentiles spiritually, the people whose hearts were prepared to receive the message.

In relation to thinking Gentiles throughout the Roman world, certainly “the fullness of the time was come.”

Virgil’s poem had also helped introduce to responsive Romans another element in the preparation for Christ’s coming—expectancy of the Deliverer.

**Other, more obscure writers with closer ties to the Old Testament followed.** By the time of Christ’s ministry, a sense of expect-

tancy had risen in a small portion of the Gentile world. But vastly greater was the sense of expectancy among many Jews.

It was, of course, the specific expectancy of the promised Messiah; and, even at His birth, it was seen in the godly remnant represented by the aged Simeon and Anna and by John the Baptist's parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth.

About thirty years later, as the Baptist began his ministry, Palestine seethed with expectation of some great prophetic event; and John's powerful preaching raised that expectancy to a peak.

Israelites with responsive hearts were ready.

**At that time, the prophetic timetable was in place.** Back at the very entrance of sin into the race, God in pure grace gave the first promise of the Deliverer; and in successive periods through the centuries, He confirmed and gave further detail regarding this Anointed One—His nature, His character, His work as suffering Servant and conquering King.

Genesis 3:15 had indicated this when God said that the "Seed of the woman" would be hard bruised but would crush the enemy's head.

With the conclusion of the ministry of Zechariah and Malachi, the prophetic portrait of Messiah was complete—even to the exact way He would present Himself to Israel as its King (Zechariah 9:9). However, there had to be a pause.

**The prophet Daniel** (Daniel 9:25, 26) had given a definite length of time between the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem by Artaxerxes

in Nehemiah 2 and Messiah's being "cut off." That period was sixty-nine "weeks" of years (483 years), which would focus the calendar on 30 A.D.

If Messiah were to come to maturity, fulfill His public ministry as described in Isaiah 61, and be "cut off" about 30 A.D., He must be born a few years before the year one.

So when Jesus was born in Bethlehem about 4 B.C., the fullness of the prophetic timetable had come; and only one born at that time could possibly be the Messiah of Old Testament promise. (The seeming paradox of Jesus Christ's being born in 4 B.C.—four years "Before Christ"—is due to a sixth century calendar maladjustment.)

**To prepare for Christ's coming,** God had to demonstrate that man needed a Savior, that he could not by his own effort make himself right. So, God brought a succession of tests under various conditions upon man. Adam had been tested under the most favorable circumstances—perfect innocence within and a perfect physical environment around. Yet he fell, and sin entered the race.

Following the Fall, although he possessed conscience as an endowment from creation and although he acquired experiential "knowledge of good and evil" from having eaten the forbidden fruit, man irrecoverably corrupted himself and brought on the judgment of the Flood.

Following that, God authorized human government with the judicial "power of the sword." But man did no better with government over him. Babel and the introduction of idolatry were the results of that test.

**God then chose one man, Abraham,** and his descendants to carry forward His purpose. He gave them promises of immeasurable blessing not conditioned on any work, but in pure grace. Those promises were sure and remained valid through the centuries, reaching climactic fulfillment in the coming of Christ.

In the meantime, however, a final test was in order. If men could personally experience the clearly supernatural delivering power of God and then have in explicit form exactly what God wanted of them, would they now respond in obedience?

So Israel was miraculously delivered from Egypt and given the Law at Sinai.

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do,” the people said.

But their self-confidence was ill-founded. Within a few days, they were breaking the core of the Law in idolatry and corruption.

**So it continued through the centuries,** despite the numbers of times God gave Israel deliverance and a fresh start through great prophets and leaders He raised up. Their repeated apostasy and deepening corruption finally brought the judgment of the captivities by Assyria and Babylonia. A chosen, delivered, and greatly privileged people under the simple, explicit Law of God had failed as badly as any previous group.

The captivities did cure Israel of open idolatry, and the rest of the period of Law can be considered as a somewhat new and special phase of

this test of man.

During this time between the Babylonian captivity and Christ's birth, there arose a group of Jews passionately devoted to the Law. The test now centered on the question, “Can a thoroughly ardent devotion to the meticulous keeping of the Law make a person right?”

The answer is obvious the moment we realize we are referring to the Pharisees. Despite their fine beginning, Christ had to denounce them as superficial, self-righteous hypocrites.

**He said they “devour widows’ houses,** even while for a pretense (they) make long prayers” (Matthew 23:14). He said they “tithed mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23). They “are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

**These, with the skeptic Sadducees,** were the leaders in demanding the death of the Son of God. Man under legalism, even with high promise at first, still ends in deep failure and demonstrates with terrible finality his need of the Savior.

From every aspect, then, it was “when the fullness of the time was come,” that “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).



The family of the late Marchant A. King, D. D.,  
and the editor of this book would love to know  
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Letters may be addressed to Glory Press, P. O. Box  
624, West Linn, Oregon 97068. E-mail letters may  
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