

Route Sixty-Six

Part Three

Leviticus

(John 5:39; Hebrews 10:5-7)

With Study Questions

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You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come – In the volume of the book it is written of Me – To do Your will, O God (Hebrews 10:5-7).’”

Introduction-The Casual God

Early in my Christian walk I encountered a believer who was seeking to help me develop a little maturity. As we talked I began to detect a level of discomfort he had for my very casual descriptions I was using when I spoke of God. It was many years ago and I don't recall the exact language I was using but it apparently bordered on irreverence. I might have been referring to God as the big man upstairs or making some indication that the faith was very cool.

He finally chastised me. “Why are you talking this way?” He asked. “God is holy! The things we're talking about are holy!” I don't recall how I responded to his reprimand, but I have never forgotten it. I didn't mean to be insulting to God. I was more intent on bringing God into the vernacular of the common people. I would speak of God the way I would speak of other things that I admired or respected. I wanted to make the Christian faith relevant to my surroundings.

I do think there is something to be said for that. The New Testament itself is written in koine (common) Greek which replaced existing ancient Greek dialects with an everyday form that people anywhere could understand. At the same time this mentality, as well meaning as it might be, has introduced a very casual God. I've often opined that one danger of

a contemporary church service is that we begin to think of God as a contemporary.

Sometime our focus on the imminence of God (the God who is right here) sacrifices the transcendence (the God who is out there) of God. The opening words of the Lord's Prayer gives us both. **"Our Father"** is intimate and close, followed by **"in heaven"** which is vast and incomprehensible. It is true that Jesus stated that He no longer called followers **"servants...but...friends (John 15:15)**. That is a comforting and wonderful condescension on His part. At the same time, we never hear His followers refer back to Jesus in that way. Paul would not open Romans **"Paul, a friend of Jesus"** but **"Paul a bonds slave of Jesus"**.

I open with this because one thing we learn in Leviticus (about Levites) is the difficulty of an audience with God. The word **"holy"** is used almost one hundred times in twenty-seven chapters. And there is a recurring call for us to be holy because God is holy. The last thing on earth a person would conclude after reading Leviticus is that God can be approached in a casual manner. God is anything but a contemporary.

In Genesis we saw the creation, fall and pronouncement of the Covenant of Grace. We read of wonderful promises given directly after the fall then with Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those promises all pointed to and would be fulfilled in Christ. In Exodus we begin to see a great drama teaching us what that promise would look like. As Moses was a deliver, so Christ would be the ultimate deliverer. His blood would effectively be applied to the doorposts of our hearts by faith and death would pass over. Christ is truly our Passover.

But deliverance from slavery had a purpose. And it was not that we might embrace a false notion of freedom which is merely bondage to some new taskmaster. Repentance is not merely turning from something but turning to something. The purpose of deliverance was that we might worship the true God and receive the eternal benefits of His favor.

This morning we ask, where do we see Jesus in Leviticus? If we read Leviticus and notice that the vast majority of requirements in Leviticus are no longer extant in the worship of the New Covenant church, we begin to have appreciation of where we see Jesus in Leviticus. Leviticus is replete with instructions for the priests and the sacrifices and the reason we have neither is because Jesus is both.

Offerings, Priests

Leviticus opens with very detailed instructions on numerous offerings. There is a burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering and trespass offering. We do none of these in the New Covenant for these provide a multi-faceted understanding of the single and sufficient sacrifice of Christ. In the burnt offering we learn of the sweet aroma, pleasing to God. In the grain offering we see the sinlessness of Christ, free of leaven. In the peace offering we see communion with God. In the sin offering we see Christ being made sin for us. In the trespass offering we also see restitution of a fifth more showing that the sacrifice is more than the mere removing of sin. It is the righteousness of Christ and thus more glorifying to God and comforting to man.

In the early portions of Leviticus we also given laws regarding the proper function of the tabernacle, the restrictions regarding touching unclean things and the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests. The instruction regarding the offerings is now applied. In chapter nine God consumes the burnt offering but in chapter ten God consumes Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron for approaching God with “**profane**” (zara- unauthorized, strange) fire.

Though this might seem austere. This behavior on the part of Nadab and Abihu (especially in light of the sacred place and detailed instruction given to them by God) was clearly irreverent. But perhaps we can view this a bit differently. Events like these, recorded for our benefit, should give us a renewed appreciation for the torn veil.

That when Christ was crucified that veil which separated the holy place from the Most Holy (Exodus 26:33), illustrating our separation from God, was torn from the top to the bottom. The notion of viewing worship as a dangerous activity has seemed to have gone the way of all flesh. A notion proving quite destructive to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:30) and who knows how many churches today?

Dietary Laws, Clean and Unclean, Leprosy, Day of Atonement

As one reads on in Leviticus you begin to get the feeling that God had developed an environment among the Israelites where they were reminded on a daily (if not moment-by-moment) basis of what it meant to be holy or unholy, clean or unclean. These reminders included the

institution of dietary laws, laws on what could and could not be touched, leprosy and other illnesses, even childbirth, served as instructional tools in these matters as well.

Many of these laws were abrogated (removed) in the New Covenant. Some because they were fulfilled by Christ, others because of the unique role Israel played in redemptive history versus the international nature of the New Covenant. These determinations are not always easy and there have been very creative and some dubious methods simplify that which is not simple at all. For now we will submit that the offerings and priestly duties are clearly fulfilled by Christ (including those things relating to leprosy, etc.). The dietary and garment restrictions seemed unique to Israel and were clearly repealed (Mark 7:19).

But this does not mean we have nothing to learn, appreciate and praise God for when it comes to the instructions on these matters. It is also a mistake to assume that the morality revealed by God in the Old Testament is no longer the basis of morality. Morality (right and wrong, good and evil) are determined by the character and nature of God and are, therefore, as immutable as God Himself.

In this midsection of Leviticus, we read of God laying at the instructions for the Day of Atonement. This event would take place once a year by a high priest who would offering atoning sacrifice himself and for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16).

Morality, Love of Neighbors, Civil Laws, Feasts

Leviticus offers clear teaching on morality which should be a source of great wisdom for believers of any era. One thing we learn here is the refutation of the false notion that the law of God is merely for Israel. The surrounding nations were vomited out of the land due to their violations of God's statutes. God warns the Israelites not to be like the Egyptians where they dwelt or like the Canaan, where He was bringing them. We must not underestimate the power of the influence of the cultures by which we are surrounded.

We also learn in Leviticus that we should make provision for the poor (corners of fields), to consider the deaf and the blind (at a time when they would have been easily disposed of), honest in our weights and measures (honest in business) and we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. These are not merely New Covenant notions.

Leviticus is also instructional when it comes to which sins should be crimes and what is a reasonable punishment for certain crimes. Here again we tend to lose an appreciation for the holiness and graciousness of God. Modern, very entitled, man often views these punishments (death penalty for various offenses) as unreasonable. Very creative methods of reading the Bible have been used to explain these things away. Let me offer just two things in explanation.

First, the Scriptures do not advocate vigilante justice either in making civil laws or enforcing them. For example, kidnapping is a capital crime according to the Scriptures. If I live in a land where kidnapping is not a capital crime, I may wish to work toward it becoming a capital crime, but I also need to submit to the process of God's providence in changing hearts and laws. I do not have the authority to walk in the street and declare kidnapping a capital crime.

I also do not have the authority to enforce civil law as a private citizen. I am not talking here about seeking to stop the kidnapper in the process of kidnapping one of my children (that is quite a different matter for which the Scriptures make provision). I do not have the authority to try and execute kidnappers in my garage.

At the same time, if we live in a culture where kidnapping becomes an acceptable behavior, kidnappers will likely begin to view the death penalty for kidnapping as ridiculous. Where the kidnapper should probably view the fact that he is alive as a testimony to God's providential forbearance, he will often view the law itself as something unreasonable. King David deserved death for what he did with Bathsheba and Uriah. We, like David, should rejoice in the lovingkindness and tender mercies of God, rather than think we don't deserve what we truly do.

Leviticus ends with instructions on various feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles. These feasts had various structures and messages. We ask where Christ is in Leviticus. He can be shown in all of these various feasts but this morning we will consider just one, The Day of Atonement.

Day of Atonement

To atone *kapper*, (from where is derived Yom Kippur) means to cover, pacify, appease or propitiate. In very simple terms we might think of how one person, paying for another, might say "I've got you covered."

There is perhaps no place in Leviticus where we see Christ as clearly as in the Day of Atonement. Once a year, only the priest (wearing appropriate garments and having offered a sacrifice for himself) would enter the Holy of Holies (which typified heaven or the presence of God). The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement would involve two goats. It is here that we get the term *scapegoat*. A scapegoat is a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings of others.

Of all the feasts and offerings, the Day of Atonement is quite unique for it is the only one that has, as it were, two sacrifices essentially operating together. The two goats cannot be separated in terms of what they typify. One goat will die and the other will live. The one who lives provides the only example in the Old Covenant involving an animal where we see a bloodless sacrifice.

The one goat is sacrificed. The priest will lay his hands upon the other goat, confess and throw the sins of the people on the goat. The goat will bear all their iniquities and is released into the wilderness. There is a bit of speculation as to how this specifically foreshadows Christ. The goat sacrificed seems obvious, but what about the scapegoat (the ones with the sins put on his head who lives)?

Some speculate that this foreshadows Christ as the outcast. So in the two goats we see Christ the Lamb sacrificed and Christ rejected by His people. Others speculate that the scapegoat typifies Christ as our living High Priest. However one looks at though, something undeniable is that we have a sacrifice where one animal was insufficient for the desired effect. One sacrifice that included both a dead and living offering.

How do people of the book explain such a thing apart from a Savior who was dead and is alive. As Jesus taught:

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (Revelation 1:8).

Knowing that it is **“not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4)**, how can mere, sinful men and women know they can have peace with God and their sins not counted against them?

In Christ, we have both the Priest and the Offering, Christ having become a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He ever lives, interceding for us. See how Leviticus is about Christ in the words of the author of Hebrews:

But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:11-15).

Questions for Study

1. What are the benefits of seeking to speak of God in common terms? What are the dangers (pages 2, 3)?
2. What word is used almost one hundred times in Leviticus? Why do you suppose that is (page, 3)?
3. What is the purpose for deliverance from slavery (page 3)?
4. How do the offerings in Leviticus tell us of Christ (page 4)?
5. How do we determine which rules or laws in the Old Covenant continue into the New Covenant (pages 4, 5)?
6. Is God's law for everyone? Explain (page 5).
7. Discuss the civil, cultural and moral instruction in Leviticus (pages 5, 6).
8. How does Christ fulfill the Day of Atonement (pages 7, 8)?