



March 2-3, 2013

Leviticus 1

“Sacrifices, Priests, and Feasts”

Part 1 - The Sacrifices

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The book of Leviticus continues with the chronology of the conclusion of the book of Exodus. The Israelites are encamped at Mt. Sinai, which is where they will be throughout the entirety of this book. Leviticus means, things pertaining to the Levites. The Levites were one of the 12 Tribes of Israel, the descendants of Levi. We learned in one of the studies in Exodus that the Levites were the only group of people who rallied to Moses during the golden calf fiasco. Their willingness to separate themselves from the wickedness of the people moved God to set them apart for his purposes and the order of the priesthood.

Before Jesus came and replaced the order of the priesthood, with himself as the only intermediary between God and man, the priests were the ones who represented God to the people, and the people to God. So this book deals with the duties of the priests and how they are to help the people worship and fellowship with God. Their ministry happened in two ways: sacrifices and feasts.

It will be helpful to have some background on the book of Leviticus as we start the first of a three-part series Pastor Gary has titled: Sacrifices, Priests, and Feasts. Several words play a significant part in Leviticus, including: blood (88 times), atonement (56 times), cleanliness (71 times), holy (91 times), and uncleanness (128 times). The basic premise of the book is that people are unclean and sinful before God, and they need a way to be made clean and holy.

The key verse in the book is [Leviticus 17:11](#), which says: *“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”* The idea was that every person was sinful and guilty before God, and that every person deserved death. God put the

sacrificial system in place to allow a worshiper to bring an innocent animal in exchange for the guilty worshiper. The animal would not only be a substitution, it would be a life for a life. The spilled blood of the animal meant that one innocent life was being poured out for a guilty life - an exchange - so that the guilty person could be forgiven and live, which is the basic understanding of atonement in the Old Testament.¹

The reason Jews did not continue the practice of sacrifices is that sacrifices necessarily had to stop when the Temple was destroyed in 70AD. Jews today believe they can be made right before God through prayer and doing good deeds. It's important to note that this is a man-made answer to the man-made problem of sin. The God-made answer to the man-made problem of sin is [Leviticus 17:11](#), which says, *"...it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."* The simple fact is that from God's perspective, there has to be blood, and God still requires a blood sacrifice today.²

The reason we no longer need animal sacrifice is because God offered a more perfect and permanent sacrifice for us on the cross 2,000 years ago! Through the sacrifice of Jesus and the shedding of his blood, everyone who believes has the opportunity to be forgiven, free, and at-one with God. And, because Jesus is perfect, he is able to save us perfectly, according to [Hebrews 10:14](#), which says: *"... because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."*

Five Types of Sacrifices/Offerings

1. Burnt Offering
 - a. The burnt offering was a voluntary offering.
 - b. The burnt offering was to be consumed by fire.

2. Grain/Meal Offering
 - a. The grain/meal offering was an offering of dedicated service.
 - b. The grain/meal offering was the only non-blood offering.
 - c. The grain/meal offering was a voluntary offering.

3. Fellowship/Peace Offering
 - a. The fellowship/peace offering was, as the name indicates, a fellowship offering.
 - b. The fellowship/peace offering was a voluntary offering.

¹ Atonement is the covering over of sin by the blood of an innocent substitution so a worshiper could be acceptable to God.

² [Hebrews 9:22](#) - *"... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*

4. Sin Offering
 - a. The sin offering was a mandatory offering for “general sins.”
5. Guilt/Trespass Offering
 - a. The guilt/trespass offering was a mandatory offering for sins against others or against God’s holy things.
 - b. An additional payment/restitution fine of 20% was also imposed.
6. All of these sacrifices and offerings point to the ultimate sacrifice and offering of Jesus.

The Sacrificial System

7. God implemented the sacrificial system in anticipation of the people’s inability to keep his Commandments, which shows his grace, because he provided a way for their atonement.
8. God did this because he knew that no one would be able to keep all of his laws, no matter how hard they try.
9. What is truly amazing is that God put the plan of salvation through Jesus before the creation of the world!
 - a. **1 Peter 1:19-20** - “... [we were redeemed] with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”
 - b. **Revelation 13:8** - “... the Lamb... was slain from the creation of the world.”
10. This is a great mystery to us because we are restricted by time and space, but God, who is not, set this plan in motion before time, and sacrificed Jesus from the creation of the world in anticipation of our inability to keep God's Laws.
11. **1 John 5:3** - “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”

The Sacrifice

12. The sacrifice must be an animal from the herd or flock.
 - a. The worshiper was not permitted to offer a wild animal, so they could only bring a domesticated animal from their herds or flocks, which means the sacrifice had to cost them something.

- b. The sacrifice will never cost us what it cost Jesus; however, Jesus did say that there would be a cost to follow him.
 - i. **Luke 9:57-62** - *“As they were talking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But the man replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.’ Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’ ”*
 - 1. When the man asked Jesus to permit him to bury his father, he didn’t mean that his father had died and he needed to attend to the burial arrangements.³
 - 2. Concerning the other man’s request to *“go back and say good-bye,”* we need to know that Jesus is not opposed to family moments of farewell, what Jesus is saying, however, is that don’t need to go back; we must move forward.
13. The sacrifice must be a male without defect.
- a. Jesus was the male without defect sacrifice for us.
 - b. **1 Peter 1:18-19** - *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*
14. The worshiper must lay his hand on the head of the animal.
- a. This was symbolic of pressing the weight of sin, of transferring the guilt upon the innocent sacrifice.
 - b. **Isaiah 53:6** - *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*
15. The worshiper must slaughter, skin, and prepare the sacrifice.
- a. Some may believe that the Romans or the Jews killed Jesus, however, the truth of the matter is each of us is responsible, because it was our sin that compelled him to go to the cross.
 - b. It wasn’t enough for the worshiper to believe that God would honor the sacrifice, because the worshiper was required to actively participate in preparing and bring the sacrifice before the priest, who merely assisted in the sacrificial offering.

³ The dead were supposed to be buried before sundown.

- c. Today, it's simply not enough for us to believe that Jesus died for our sins; we must take action of faith.
- d. Our faith becomes action when, "with my lips I confess him as Lord, and with my life I live for him as Lord!"

Parallels To The Leviticus Offerings

16. Following Jesus will cost us something.
17. Jesus sacrificed his life for our sins.
18. Our sin was transferred to Jesus on the cross.
19. We all participated in slaughtering Jesus, and following him requires action, not just belief.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Leviticus 1:1-9](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Provide an overview of the five types of sacrifices/offerings.
4. Read and discuss [1 Peter 1:19-20](#) and [Revelation 13:8](#).
5. Has it been your experience that obeying God's "*commands are not burdensome*"?
6. Read and discuss [Luke 9:57-62](#).
 - a. What would your answer be if Jesus asked you to go with him even though you had no idea where your next meal would come from or where you'd stay the night?
 - b. What is your reaction to Jesus' statement that "*no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God*"?
 - c. Spend time talking about your experiences in following and serving the Lord.

7. How do you respond to skeptics, like Voltaire, who say that Christianity is a bloody religion? ⁴
8. In what ways has following Jesus cost you something?
9. Spend time talking about the personal aspects of [Isaiah 53:6](#).
 - a. How has knowing the Lord put you on the path of godliness and personal holiness?
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that all of the sacrifices of the Old Testament point to Jesus Christ; rejoice over the fact that Jesus was the perfect, permanent sacrifice for their sin, and that the shedding of his blood on the cross has made it possible for everyone to be forgiven so they can come into right relationship with God.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

⁴ “Christianity is the most ridiculous, the most absurd, and bloody religion that has ever infected the world.”