

# LEVITICUS

## Chapter 17

We continue our study tonight in the book of Leviticus Chapter 17. Before we consider Chapter 17, let's review briefly what pastor has previously taught us.

The book of Leviticus contains 27 chapters. It is the middle book of the Pentateuch and stands at the heart of the Old Testament, Torah. Some call Leviticus the "Book of Worship" and as such it is dedicated and devoted to the instructions concerning worship of the redeemed people of God. Perhaps it could be said that the theme of the book of Leviticus is, "holiness." This book probably had more impact on Judaism than any other book of the Old Testament. Traditionally, it was the first book taught to Jewish children. There are more direct messages from the Lord to His people in the book of Leviticus (approximately 103) than any other book in the Bible. 56 times, the book of Leviticus states that, "the Lord spoke to Moses." 85% of the book is composed of direct instructions from the Lord. The book of Leviticus is filled with "divine inspiration." The book of Leviticus is referred to about 40 times in the New Testament and should be of great significance to every Christian because it contains extensive revelation concerning the **character of God**, especially His holiness, but also His electing love and grace.

Leviticus deals with the worship of Israel, how, when, where, by whom, its sacrifices, priesthood, laws concerning people who are disqualified for worship (often called unclean) and various special times and seasons of worship. It contains many specific regulations pertaining to daily living and practical holiness, both ethical and ceremonial.

Leviticus could be called, "legal literature" because it expresses necessary conduct described as, "you shall not," and specific expressions suggesting, "if you will, then such and such will be the result." By these literary forms, God chose to reveal certain truths about sin and its consequence and about holiness of lifestyles before God to His covenant people, Israel.

The primary theme of Leviticus is found in Leviticus 19:1-2 which states: “(1) **And the Lord spoke to Moses**, saying, (2) “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, **You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.**” By way of application, this theme is as significant for Christians today as it was when Leviticus was written. In the New Testament, 1 Peter 1:15-16 states: “(15) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy **in all your conduct**, (16) since it is written, ‘**You shall be holy, for I am holy.**’”

A lot of emphasis is placed on procedures and the way things were to be done, but Leviticus is primarily a book of holiness/separateness. Such holiness and separateness is ultimately symbolic and foundational for ethical holiness because God himself is separate and apart from all that is sinful and profane. He is holy, majestically holy, and His son, Jesus Christ, exemplified that separateness and holiness. Chapters 1 - 16 deal basically with worship before a holy God.

We have previously learned that there were 5 different types of offerings which God specifically instructed His people to make.

<b>OFFERINGS</b>		
<b>Type</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Offering</b>
Burnt Offering (1:1-17, 6:8-13)	Atonement for sin in general, enabling an unholy people to approach a holy God	Unblemished bull; male sheep or goat; mail or female dove/pigeon (based on wealth)
Grain Offering (2:1-6; 6:14-23)	An expression of thanksgiving and dedication to God.	Flour or grain
Peace (Fellowship) Offering (3:1-17; 7:11-38)	An expression of gratitude and desire for fellowship with God	Unblemished bull/male or female sheep/goat
Sin Offering (4:1-5:13; 6:24-30)	Atonement for unintentional sins of weakness or carelessness	Unblemished bull/male or female goat
Guilt (Trespass) Offering (5:14-6:7; 7:1-10)	Atonement for specific sins; injured persons compensated for their losses	Unblemished ram

In last week's lesson in Chapter 16, Pastor taught us about the day of atonement and the necessity for the priests to first offer **sacrifice for themselves**, then for the **place of worship**, and then for **the people** who have gathered to worship. Pastor also taught us that the "day of atonement" is perhaps the most consequential and important of the offerings. Not that the other offerings are unimportant, because anything God told the children of Israel or tells us to do, is important. However, the day of atonement was a time when the High Priest makes a sin offering **for himself**, the **place of worship** and **the people**, enabling an unholy people to approach a holy God.

"Holy" when related to people, means "being separated **to God**;" being "different;" living just, loving, "sinless" lives to the best of our ability and living apart from **all** that is sinful or unclean. When applied to God, "holy" means that God is separate and apart and untouched from all/anything evil or sinful and is completely pure and distinct from mankind. Leviticus 11:44 states: "(44) For **I am** the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for **I am** holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. (45) For **I am** the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for **I am** holy."

We see in this passage, a reference to the Lord God Yahweh and the use of the term, "I am." If you recall, when Moses was being prepared by God to lead the people out of Egypt, when Moses asked "who shall I tell Pharaoh sent me," the Lord told him to tell Pharaoh that "I am" has sent you. (Exodus 3:14) The Bible is consistent and perhaps this is another example. I think that the Lord continues to use specific, descriptive language to help us understand who He is and how we are to consider Him.

Leviticus Chapters 17-27 are sometimes referred to as the "Holiness Code." "Today, as we look at Chapter 17 in the book of Leviticus, we find specific instructions from God to His people regarding who, how, and where worship and sacrifices were to be offered to God. God's people were intended to live Holy, separated lives. Leviticus 17:1-16 provides as follows:

“(1) **And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,**”

Here again we find another reference to a communication directly from God through Moses to His people.

“(2) “Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the Lord has **commanded**.”

As you know from previous studies, Aaron and his sons were chosen by God to be priests and leaders of worship for His people. In Exodus 28:1, the Bible says, “(1) Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. (2) And you shall make **holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.**” Aaron and his sons in the Old Testament, typify Christ and believers in the church age. Aaron is a type of Christ as our High Priest. We are taught that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek in **Hebrews Chapter 7**, but he executes his priestly office after the pattern of Aaron (Hebrews 9). Aaron's sons are a type of believer priests of the church age. In the church age, in which we now live, each of us, as a priest, has direct access to God because of the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood on the cross for our sins. The veil of the temple was torn from the top down and all Christians acquired a “birth right” of priesthood (often called the priesthood of the believers) just as Aaron was born into the priesthood in the Old Testament. (Hebrews 5:1-4; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6)

“(3) If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat **in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, (4)** and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and **that man shall be cut off from among his people.** (5) This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting,

and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the Lord. (6) And the priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the Lord. (7) So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.”

Any animal killed for food was to be brought to the tabernacle, where the blood and fat became a peace offering; then the meat could be eaten. No hardship would be imposed on the people because meat was not a part of the usual diet except during festivals. The command was designed to keep them from offering the blood of animals, slaughtered for food, to goat demons (goat-like demons), popular pagan idols of that day. This prohibition against the killing of animals without offering them to the Lord was enacted in the wilderness of Sinai when the Israelites had a staple diet of manna but also domesticated animals to be eaten as regular food. Thus, God in ruling out non-sacrificial slaughter, intended to prevent **the possibility** of the Israelites offering sacrifices to idols. The word “goat idols” here is a reference to a form of idolatrous goat worship which may have been practiced in the Eastern Delta of lower Egypt. God is specific in declaring that no individual could kill an animal as game or otherwise and eat it without offering it as a sacrifice to God. Failure to specifically follow this instruction suggests impending divine destruction, not by the hand of man, but by the hand of God. Some theologians say that this refers to banishment by God from the nation and not physical destruction by God.

“(8) “And you shall say to them, any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice (9) and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it to the Lord, that man shall be **cut off from his people.**”

I don't know if physical destruction is meant here, all I know is what the word of God says. Though

some theologians say it simply means banishment from the tribe.

“(10) “If any one of **the house of Israel or of the strangers** who sojourn among them, eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. (11) For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to **make atonement for your souls**, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. (12) Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.”

Note that there is a distinction in Verse 3 which states, “If any one of the house of Israel” and in Verse 10 which states, “If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them.” The reference in Verse 10 includes people who have joined themselves to the Jews but who are not Jews. You might remember when the people came out of bondage in Egypt, the Bible said that a “mixed multitude” went up also with them (Exodus 12:38). So from the time of the Exodus, there were those who had joined themselves to the Jews who were not Jews. In all probability, these “strangers/sojourners” historically caused the Jews problems by wanting to practice and practicing their pagan worship services and trying to encourage the Jews to worship idols and gods other than Jehovah God. Here, the Lord is speaking to them who have attached themselves to the Jewish faith stating clearly that His laws for holiness directed to the Jews also apply to those who would follow Jewish law and custom. Note also in Verse 11 the statement, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls.” This phrase amplifies that blood carries life-sustaining elements to all parts of the body. Therefore, it represents the essence of life. The shedding of blood represents the shedding of life or death. New Testament references to the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ are references to his death and his blood that makes atonement for our sins. Since it contains life itself, blood is sacred to God. The shed blood of Jesus Christ, a substitute, i.e., the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, atones for or covers the sinner

who is then allowed to live and without multiple sacrifices, is declared righteous and holy by **one sacrifice**, the shedding of Christ's blood. God never intended to suggest that the sacrifice and shedding of the blood of bulls or goats should take away sins. (Hebrews 9:11-22; Hebrews 10:4-22)

“(13) “Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. (14) For the life of every creature [a] is its blood: its blood is its life.[b] Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.”

It was customary with heathen hunters (the strangers/sojourners) who did not know the Lord, when they killed any game, to pour out the blood as an offering to the “god of the hunt.” The Israelites on the other hand, to the contrary, were enjoined by God and banned from all such superstitious acts of idolatry or sacrifice to any god except the God of Israel.

“(15) And every person who eats what dies of itself or what is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or a sojourner, shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening; then he shall be clean. (16) But if he does not wash them or bathe his flesh, he shall bear his iniquity.”

This cleansing was necessary because these animals would not have had the blood drained properly from them (Deuteronomy 14:21).

These specific instructions and laws were modified later as indicated in Deuteronomy 12:20-32: “(20) “When the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you, and you say, ‘I will eat meat,’ because you crave meat, you may eat meat whenever you desire. (21) If the place that the Lord your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you (the temple, synagogue, tabernacle, place of corporate worship), then you may kill any of your herd or your flock, which the Lord has given you, as I have

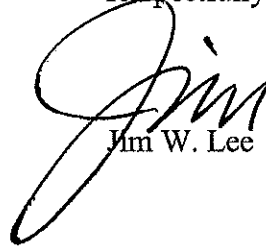
commanded you, and you may eat within your towns whenever you desire. (22) Just as the gazelle or the deer is eaten, so you may eat of it. The unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. (23) **Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.** (24) You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the earth like water. (25) **You shall not eat it, that all may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.** (26) But the holy things that are due from you, and your vow offerings, you shall take, and you shall go to the place that the Lord will choose, (27) and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the Lord your God. The blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but the flesh you may eat. (28) **Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.**” God is specific, even when He modifies His instructions or “cuts His people some slack,” to make sure they understand that they are still a special “set aside” people who do exactly as God commands them. Partial obedience is still disobedience in God’s eyes.

Some people have questioned why there were so many specific instructions to the people after they came out of the land of Egypt in the Exodus. We need to remember that these people had been slaves for 400 years. That means that they have been told what to eat, what to wear, where to work, what to do, etc. They made few, if any, decisions of their own. So God in His mercy and grace decided to give them specific instructions about how to live, what to eat, how to sacrifice, how to worship, and when, where, how, and by whom worship should be managed. Everything He did for them and everything He instructed them in the word of God was for their good and for their benefit and not to be a burden to them or be a situation that would become unmanageable for them. To the contrary, God wanted His people to live holy, separated lives and He felt, I believe, that it was necessary for Him to be specific in His instructions and that’s why there is so much specificity in the scripture. That is why God’s cautions in the scripture that we’re not to **take**



away or add to anything He said because He knew what He was doing when He made the earth, He knows what He's doing when He leads His people through their lives and He knows what He's doing when he takes people home to Heaven with Him. So, that I think is one explanation at least for the specificity of the scripture. The people didn't know what to do because they had been 400 years without having the opportunity to make their own decisions. God sees our lives from beginning to end. We only see what we can see. But God knows what is best and right for us. For our part, we need only to listen to Him, trust Him, and do His will. He will take care of the outcome. God bless you.

Respectfully,



Jim W. Lee