

The Book Of Leviticus As Biblical Theology
Revealing God's Acts In History
To Redeem Fallen Man

By

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INTRODUCTION

The book of Leviticus is a fascinating book. Intricately woven within its statutes and judgments lie the keys to a greater understanding of God and his love for mankind. Within the scope of modern day Christianity, Leviticus is made to appear as something too difficult to understand and too difficult to read. The greatest tragedy in refusing to come to terms with this book, takes place within the heart of the man or woman who fail to truly comprehend its inner beauty. There's more than enough pertinent and up to date information contained within this book than most people realize. Not that we in the twenty-first century are expected to live under the statues and judgments found there, rather, the treasure of Leviticus for us today is found in its types and shadows. Each *offering* pointed of a greater *offering* to come. Each *feast* pointed to a greater *feast* to come. To the children of Israel living at the time the book was given, the rules and regulations were no doubt difficult and hard to bear. But we cannot allow ourselves to overlook the fact that it was God who gave them! God had a definite purpose and plan in mind when he gave Moses the book of Leviticus. Indeed, contained within that complex system of rules and regulations one can discover a beautiful portrait of God's unconditional love for those individuals who are born in an age of grace.

Accordingly, any information that can be gleaned from this book will make the child of God that much wiser and better prepared to understand the remainder of the Old Testament as well the New. By way of illustration, one needs to look no further than the Old Testament book of Malachi. The last book

of the Old Testament was written somewhere between 445 and 420 B.C. about one hundred years after Minor Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The book of Leviticus was written somewhere in the area of 1445 B.C., so there is at least one thousand years of biblical and world history that elapsed between the two books. However, practically the entire book of Malachi is founded upon the moral and spiritual principles found in the book of Leviticus. Leviticus finds its beginnings after the exodus from Egypt. Malachi finds its beginnings after the exodus from Babylon. In Leviticus, God through Moses gives the law and decrees that would aid Israel in living for and serving their God. The book of Malachi contains instructions on how Israel should properly worship and serve their God. Leviticus contains instructions for the Mosaic priesthood on how they are to conduct the business of the tabernacle, so too does Malachi. The Biblical student of the twenty-first century has a greater chance of understanding the book of Malachi after they gain a proper understanding of Leviticus.

The book of Hebrews contained within the canon of the New Testament can be understood in much the same way. It is believed that Hebrews was written somewhere around A.D. 62 and A.D. 64, making a span of almost fourteen hundred years of biblical and world history between the two. Yet nine of the thirteen chapters that comprise the book of Hebrews speak directly to Leviticus. Here too the student of the twenty-first century has a greater chance of understanding the book of Hebrews after they gain a proper understanding of Leviticus.

Throughout the course of this dissertation I will be answering the following questions:

- Does Leviticus contain a God ordained worldview, or is it to be seen as nothing more than outdated legalism?
- Did Christ reference Leviticus and its function within the history of Israel? If so, how did he address it and to what extent?
- Does Leviticus reveal the heart of God for all mankind, or is it limited to one particular nation or age?
- Does an in-depth study on Leviticus disclose types and shadows of Jesus Christ as God's ultimate sacrifice for sin?
- Can Leviticus speak to the twenty-first century and address such sociological issues as homosexuality and witchcraft?

What makes the book of Leviticus so relevant in the life of God's church today, is the fact that God himself was the author. Given to Moses via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the instructions contained within the book fall on the heels of the Israelite's exodus from Egypt. Israel is now to become its own nation. No longer would they live out their lives under the rule of Egyptian Pharaohs. For the first time in over 300 years, the Israelites would need a set of rules or laws to govern them; something visible for them to see and touch in order that they may grasp God's direction for their lives.

This is why it was imperative that the book of Leviticus be written, because those rules and regulations determined Israel's stance in relation to their God. How would Israel know if they were going against God if they didn't have God's law in front of them? How would the Israelite man or woman know how to find forgiveness from their sin, if God failed to teach them? In many ways, the book of Leviticus was no different for the Israelite than the Bible is for us today. How

could the modern day Christian know they were going against God's will if God did not first reveal himself to us in his word? On our own, how could we ever know that our sins can be forgiven? Yet over the span of thousands of years and under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, mankind today can be brought back into a proper relationship with God. A God ordained relationship that is written about within the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus derives its name from its contents. It is a book containing the laws of the priests, the sons of Levi. Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah who took part in a horrific act of vengeance against the men of Shechem over his sister Dinah. Levi also gave his approval when his brother Joseph was sold into slavery. Levi may have been an evil man, but his descendants would ultimately become the main line of support for the priesthood, who would earn their living by performing the work of God on behalf of the nation of Israel. Because of this, the tribe of Levi became known as the Levites. So then, the name Leviticus means a book, which contains the laws of the priests.

Set the Scene

In the third month after Israel had fled Egyptian captivity, God's chosen leader Moses, is instructed to ascend Mt. Sinai. Israel would need leadership, guidance and protection. Moses looks to God to find answers to the questions concerning Israel's future now that they have been set free. In Exodus chapter 20, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments. In chapters 21-23, God gives Moses the Law or judgments that Moses would use when settling disputes. In chapter 24, Israel affirms God's covenant by having the blood of an ox sprinkled

on them. At the close of that same chapter, God calls Moses back to the top of Sinai, where he spends the next 40 days and 40 nights receiving the blueprints for the Tabernacle. God longed for a place where he could ‘come down’ and dwell within the midst of his people. Chapters 25-31 of the book of Exodus, deal with all aspects of the Tabernacle. The furniture, clothing and offerings are described in great detail. Moses’ direct encounter with God moves along nicely until chapter 32. There we are brought face to face with the stark reality that Israel truly doesn’t understand their God, because chapters 32-34 deal with the problem of the golden calf. It had become the opinion of the Israelites that Moses was spending way too much time on top of the mountain. In fact, the Bible informs us that they weren’t even sure if he was still alive. So instead of waiting on the Lord and placing their trust and faith in him, Israel relies upon their knowledge of the past. Knowledge acquired while living in Egypt. At the first sign of delay, Israel ignores their newly confirmed covenant with God, and turns instead to a false god made of gold. Years later while standing before the Jewish Sanhedrin proclaiming his innocence, Stephen made reference to this event:

“³⁹ Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, ⁴⁰ saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ⁴¹ And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands” (Acts7:39-41). ESV

Long before they broke camp and started towards the land of Promise, in their heart, Israel turned back to Egypt! From there we learn of Moses’ great intercession and God’s great mercy in pardoning a group of men and women who did not deserve his act of mercy and forgiveness.

To truly comprehend and appreciate God's love, great stress must be placed upon God's acts within the history of mankind. When God completed his creation of the world and all things that are in it, he described it as being 'very good.' Death, sickness and sin were not part of God's original intent or original creation. Mankind formed in the very image of God was instructed to replenish and populate the earth. The only provision God placed upon Adam and Eve in their garden paradise, was to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There are those skeptics who would claim that God was setting Adam and Eve up for a fall. "Why bother to place the tree there in the first place?" "If God didn't want Adam and Eve to eat from that tree, then he shouldn't have put the tree there." To the biblical novice, that line of reasoning might seem sound but Dr. Henry Morris offers an alternative explanation:

There was only a single, minor restraint; but it would be this restraint that would test man's love for God, giving him the opportunity to reject God's word if he wished. Thus the one restriction placed by God on Adam was singularly appropriate for its purpose. This was the simplest imaginable test of man's attitude toward his Creator. Would he 'trust and obey' because he loved the one who had shown such love for him; or would he doubt God's goodness and resent his control, rejecting and disobeying his word on even such an apparently trivial restriction?¹

Understanding the Garden of Eden from this point of view has a dramatic impact on the rest of Scripture. God is not an evil ogre sitting up in the heavens waiting for mankind to sin in order that he might dish out just punishment. It was his great love for mankind that led God to offer creation a choice. God will have a people who love him for the wondrous things he's done, not a group of robots who are incapable of loving on their own. Adam must be afforded the opportunity

¹ Henry Morris, The Genesis Record (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), p 93.

to choose! Without Adam's ability to make decisions the entire human race is condensed to nothing more than a group of gloried automatons. An idea that Bela Strickland points out very clearly in his book *One Wrong Bite*:

Which was boxed in – Adam or the tree? Was the boundary drawn around Adam or around the tree? God did not draw a circle around Adam and tell him not to go outside his circle; he drew a circle around the tree. All he had to do was leave it alone. He had a perfect home – no death, no sickness, no decay, no worry – everything was perfect in paradise. Yet, Adam ignored God's generous provision!²

And mankind has been doing the same thing ever since! Sin, sickness and death were introduced into the world via Adam and Eve's one act of disobedience. An act of disobedience that God has been making provisions for since before the beginning of time. In fact, as Adam and Eve stood guilty before the God of Heaven, before they had even been driven from their Garden home, God promised a Redeemer who would rectify man's sin:

"¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:14-15). ESV

God acting in history to redeem fallen man! Mankind was now completely out of the will of God and unable to justify or make recompense for his actions. The fate of man would be determined in how God reacted to man's sin:

"²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). ESV

² Bela Strickland, *One Wrong Bite* (Camarillo: Xulon Press, 2012), p 15.

God's answer to the sin and disobedience of mankind was the shedding of blood.

The innocent for the guilty. The clean for the unclean. The pure for those

stained by sin. Adam Clarke remarks:

Hence, we may safely infer that the skins were taken off victims offered under the direction of God himself, and in faith of HIM who, in the fullness of time, was to make an atonement by his death. And it seems reasonable also that the very first death that took place in the world was an emblem and type of that death which should conquer Satan, destroy his empire, reconcile God to man, convert man to God, sanctify human nature, and prepare it for heaven.³

The very first act of sacrifice embodied the type and figure of Him who was to come and ultimately redeem the entire human race.

It should come as no surprise then that the book of Leviticus is the bloodiest book in the Bible! Blood is mentioned a total of 88 times within this one book alone, pointing to the importance of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. On the night before Israel was to be set free from their Egyptian servitude, God warned of one final plague that would consume the firstborn of Pharaoh, the captive in the dungeon, and the livestock who fed in the field. The only way the Israelite could have the Death angel 'pass over' their home, was to swipe the tops of their doorposts with blood! But not just any blood, the blood of a pure spotless lamb. Only that type of blood would enable the Israelite to last through the night. God acting within history to redeem fallen man! Israel did not deserve to receive God's forgiveness, yet God in his mercy and love willingly forgave Israel and provided a means of reconciliation back to him.

³ Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

However, just as it was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, forgiveness from sin came in the form of the shedding of blood. An act of sacrifice that would become the very foundation upon which the book of Leviticus exists. Paul House declares that:

Only as Israel meets Yahweh's expectations for holiness can the people expect to insure and enjoy the Lord's presence. Since Exodus 25-31 introduces the sanctuary, the altar and the priests, while Exodus 32-40 discusses the initial grounds upon which Yahweh will be present in Israel's midst ... It seems appropriate to conclude that the ceremonies in Leviticus are designed to foster communion between God and Israel. Then Leviticus 1-7 discusses the process by which worshipers offer sacrifices for their sin. Unquestionably this section stresses that God forgives those who by faith bring the sacrifices Yahweh requires.⁴

Yahweh's expectations for holiness and forgiveness are not limited to one particular age or race! Forgiveness from sin through the shedding of blood is a God ordained worldview that cannot be limited by time or space.

"26 For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). ESV

The religious and moral instructions that God delivered to the Israelites as they embarked on their journey to the land of Promise, are timeless instructions for those individuals who long to be set free from the guilt and chains of sin. Rather than being comprised of outdated legalism, the book of Leviticus contains pertinent and up-to-date information for the sincere student of God's word.

M.R. DeHaan aptly connects the Old Testament with the New (and beyond) by describing the importance of blood:

⁴ Paul R. House, Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p 127.

From Genesis to Revelation we see the stream of blood which imparts to the book the very life of God. Without the blood the Bible would be like any other book and of no more value, for the Bible plainly teaches that the life is in the blood.⁵

Part of the instructions that Moses received from God while up on Mount Sinai, included great detail concerning the building of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle would become an extremely important part of Israel's daily life. Here the priests and Levites would perform their work for God on behalf of Israel, and their work for Israel on behalf of God. DeHaan illustrates just how vital the Tabernacle would become:

There is no portion of Scripture richer in meaning, more perfect in its teaching of the plan of redemption, than this divinely designed building. God himself was the architect, and every detail points to some aspect of the character and work of the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is probably the most comprehensive, detailed revelation of Jesus the Son of God, and the plan of salvation in the entire Old Testament.⁶

As the central focus for the nation of Israel, the Tabernacle discloses types and shadows of Jesus Christ who became the ultimate sacrifice for sin! The Bible teaches us that the Tabernacle was completed in the first month of the second year after Israel had fled from Egypt. So from the time that Moses met with God on top of the Mount until the Tabernacle was completed, two years had gone by. So from the first day of the first month in the second year until the twentieth day of the second month in the second year, Israel waited. Waited for what? They waited for Moses to receive the laws of the priests, or the book of Leviticus.

⁵ M. R. DeHaan, The Chemistry Of The Blood (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1943), p. 13.

⁶ M. R. DeHaan, The Tabernacle (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), p. 13.

Chapter One

The Burnt Offering

“¹ The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying,” (Lev. 1:1) ESV

Immediately we’re told where this conversation between God and Moses took place. It was within the ‘*tent of meeting*’ which is a term used to describe the Old Testament Tabernacle. Strong’s Concordance renders the word *tabernacle* to mean a “covering, a tent, or a home.”⁷ Moses and the Israelites have just spent the past two years constructing *a home* for God. In Exodus 40, after Moses had completed his work, the Bible says that the glory of the Lord came down and filled the completed structure. In a literal sense, Moses was building God a home! But not just any home. God wasn’t interested in brick and mortar that would limit his time with man, rather, he wanted to *live* with his people, *lead* his people, and allow the surrounding nations to witness his *blessing* upon them. In short, God longed to dwell in the midst of those whom he loved.

A depiction of the Israelite encampment reveals the importance of the Tabernacle. God’s home was the nucleolus around which life in Israel revolved. God wants to be the center of attention! God loves mankind so much, that he longs to be the main drive and focus in our lives. Paul understood God’s longing to live with man, and wrote these words concerning God:

⁷ Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 BibleSoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc. All rights reserved.

“16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16). ESV

Long before Jesus Christ appeared on the face of earth, God was in heaven looking forward to a time when he could *literally* dwell within man. A time when he could walk *in* and *among* us. John understood God's desire as well, and in his gospel wrote:

“14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). ESV

The word *dwelt* in the Greek means Tabernacle! God in the form of Jesus Christ took on flesh and made his home among mankind. Why? Because he loves us. And it is his great love for us that causes him to go to great lengths to provide us with the opportunity to have ‘Christ in me the hope of glory.’

However, at the time that Moses received the law, Christ had not yet come. So God chose to find a way to live with man, because on his own man was helpless to find a way to live with God. Paul offers a beautiful portrait as to why it was so important that God make a way to live with man:

“9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10). ESV

The words *‘that the power of Christ may rest upon me,’* carry the connotation of Christ overshadowing Paul like a Tabernacle. Paul knew that complete and total dependence on Jesus Christ would afford him the protection of Almighty God!

He could boast in his weakness because Christ lived within him, and God's love sheltered him from the storms of life.

Moses and the children of Israel had the awesome power and presence of God overshadowing them and protecting them from harm. That power and protection came from God *dwelling* in their midst. This is why it was so important that Moses finish the work God gave him to do. Moses wasn't just making a home for God; Moses was ensuring the success of the nation of Israel by making God the center of attention!

Knowing that God longs to enter into a personal one-on-one relationship with man, and witnessing the great strides he has taken in order that man might enjoy a proper relationship with him, it would be in our best interest to keep God as the center of attention in our lives as well. Allowing Christ to be the nucleolus of our life is a God ordained worldview that supersedes all eras of time. Far too many 'Christians' lose sight of just how important it is to maintain a relationship with God, choosing to focus on the hardships of life rather than the unconditional grace and mercy afforded them through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. This same group of people who had witnessed God's awesome power at the Red Sea, would set out from Sinai and in just three short days complain about the lack food and water. The modern day student of the Bible reads about Israel's complaints in the wilderness, and wonders how anyone could be so nearsighted. "They had God right there in the camp with them. What right did they have to complain?" And yet, isn't it true that we today have God *right here with us*? Has he not promised to take up residence in our hearts? What right then do we have

to complain? May God grant his church the wisdom to take our eyes off of our trials and make him the center of attention in our lives.

In Leviticus 1:2-9, God begins to share with Moses the process through which, the Israelites were to offer a sacrifice to him. There are five offerings listed in Leviticus: the burnt, the grain, the peace, the sin, and the trespass. With each successive offering, God had a definite plan in mind. Each one meant to reveal his desire to be the 'center of attention' and, what Israel must do to ensure that he remains there. In essence, for Israel to keep God as the 'center of attention' in their lives, they had to meet certain requirements set up for them by God. It is no different for the Christian of the 21st century. If God is to remain as the *main focus and drive* in our lives and the life of the church, then we who comprise the body must meet the requirements set up for us by God. This is an often misunderstood aspect of Scripture and Christianity, of which Theodore Plantinga writes:

We must recognize that God's law is closely bound up with his covenant with his people, the covenant that ultimately goes back to the very beginning of human history. We must learn to read the law within a covenant context. The law was not given as a piece of advice to mankind in general. God addressed the law specifically to his covenant people. God's law is one channel through which his love for his people comes to expression. While it reminds them constantly of their sins, it also gives *life*.⁸

There is *life* in obeying God's law! God reveals *his* morals and standards in the law he gave to Moses on behalf of his covenant people. In God's eyes, it is impossible to give him the place he deserves in our lives without first meeting his requirements. Plantinga continues:

⁸ Theodore Plantinga, Reading The Bible As History (Burlington: G.R. Welch Company, Limited, 1980), p. 80.

When we look at the law from the perspective of redemptive history [Biblical Theology], the confusion is quickly dispelled. Salvation comes to us from God and is not conditional upon keeping the law. We keep the law to express our gratitude for the gift of salvation, and also because the law is a source of life and strength. In this regard the law is definitely binding for New Testament believers, just as it was for the Old Testament saints. The only difference is that the Old Testament rituals and regulations pointed ahead to Christ's redemptive work.⁹

Thus the offerings contained within the book of Leviticus definitely point forward in time to reveal God's love for man through the sacrifice of his only begotten Son Jesus. Herein lies the heart of God, for as the old hymn states, "whosoever surely meaneth me."¹⁰ Plantinga concludes:

A redemptive historical approach to scripture leaves plenty of room for an emphasis on the law - provided it is understood that our observance of the law is not the basis of our salvation.¹¹

The first offering discussed within the law is the Burnt Offering. An offering whose entire purpose was to prepare the Israelite to gain acceptance from God. Was it coincidence that the first offering mentioned is one which makes man acceptable to God? It lies beyond all doubt that the path to placing God in the very center of our lives begins at the point of sacrifice. No sacrifice...No God. Know sacrifice...Know God.

The word *offering* in the Hebrew is *qorban* which means to "draw near." An offering then is something that draws a person's heart to God, or prepares

⁹ Ibid p. 81.

¹⁰ J. Edwin McConnell, "Whosoever" Meaneth Me, http://cyberhymnal.org/bio/m/c/mcconnell_je.htm (accessed December 8, 2013).

¹¹ Theodore Plantinga, Reading The Bible As History (Burlington: G.R. Welch Company, Limited, 1980), p. 81.

them to enter into his presence. A *burnt* offering would prepare the heart of the Israelite to be accepted by God, and to be drawn into his presence.

It was of great importance then, that the Israelite pay close attention to the detail.

How they made this offering was just as important as the offering itself.

“3 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the Lord” (Lev. 1:3). ESV

The animal offered in sacrifice was to be a male without blemish. The importance of this command is found in the value of the animal to be offered. An *unblemished* male (whether from flock or herd) was of great value to the owner, as well as a prime source of production in breeding. Such an animal would also supply wool, meat, or money if sold. To the Israelite, God’s requirement of an *unblemished male* was truly an act of sacrifice! It meant giving something of great value away. Something that could have brought that individual and their family a great profit.

No doubt there were some in the camp that cringed when Moses read this verse. The thought of having to ‘give away’ something so costly might have seemed too high a price to pay. That is, until they took the time to consider where that offering would place them in relationship to God. Through the death of that animal, and the shedding of its blood, the Israelite would find themselves in God’s good favor.

It should also be noted that the animal was to be offered of the Israelite’s *own free will*. Not only was the Israelite to give their best, but it was to be given freely! A gift given with a clear conscience and out of a loving heart. What good

would it do to offer the best of your herd begrudgingly? How meaningful and relevant would the sacrifice be if it were given half-heartedly? God expects our best! Our best offered from a heart that is bent on being pleasing to him.

Therefore, *how* the offering was made, and the *state of mind* that the offering was made in, determined God's acceptance of the sacrifice.

“4 He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (Lev. 1:4). ESV

Adam Clarke comments that by placing their hand on the head of the offering, the Israelite was acknowledging four things:

1. The sacrifice as his own.
2. That he offered it as an atonement for his sins.
3. That he was worthy of death because he had sinned having forfeited his life by breaking the law.
4. That he entreated God to accept the life of the innocent animal in place of his own.¹²

It is important to note here that the burnt offering was the only offering that was wholly consumed on the altar. Every part of the animal was placed on the fire, meaning that the individual who brought the offering held nothing in reserve! For the Israelite, giving God the best that they owned, of their own free will, placed on the altar as a burnt sacrifice to God, would produce a sweet-smelling aroma pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. That type of sacrifice would bring them into a proper relationship with God.

There in the very first offering mentioned to Moses by God, lies a beautiful picture of Calvary! Pointing to a time when God would replace the blood of bulls and goats and lamb's, with the blood of his precious son Jesus.

¹² Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

Thirty one times in the New Testament Jesus is referred to as a Lamb, and every reference points to him as redeemer. Prepared as a Lamb from before the foundation of the world, Christ's birth, life, and death would carry more eternal ramifications than anyone could ever imagine.

“11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn. 14:11). ESV

Paul would take Christ's words a step further and make a solid connection between Jesus and the old Mosaic law:

“7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). ESV

Year's after Christ's ascension, Peter would offer the recipients of his letter this description on the life of Christ:

“18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake” (1 Pet. 1:18-20). ESV

Notice how Peter portrays the life of Christ by using the exact same requirements God gave to Moses for the burnt offering? Even Isaiah would make a connection between the burnt offering and Christ's ultimate sacrifice:

“7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before it's shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth” (Is. 53:7). ESV

Leviticus 1:3 contains two points that transcend time! *A male without blemish, who was offered of his own free will.* Could there be any better description of the life of Christ? Jesus Christ himself completes the comparison between Old Testament and New:

“17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (Jn. 10:17-18).
ESV

Jesus willingly, humbly, and meekly gave his life on an old rugged cross in order that ‘whosoever will’ might receive everlasting life. And in doing so, completely fulfilled every requirement of the burnt offering! Russell Byrum offers this comparison between the burnt offering and the death of Jesus Christ:

Here comes an earnest appearing Israelite leading a bullock by a halter. A priest robed in white linen garments approaches him and directs him with his animal to the north side of the altar. The offerer here solemnly places his hand upon the bullock in token of his identifying himself with it that it may suffer in his stead, that it may die for his sins, that its life may be poured out that his may be retained. Then he slowly reaches for and unsheathes a large knife provided for the purpose. With one quick stroke he cuts the bullock’s throat and it falls prostrate and quivering upon the ground. While it struggles in the throes of death, the skillful hand of the priest holds to the ground a vessel provided for the purpose to catch the blood, while it spurts and gurgles from the cruel, ugly wound of the poor, suffering animal as its struggles grow weaker. But I hear a kind-hearted reader saying, “I cannot bear this sight of suffering, and must turn my face away.” But, reader, let me direct your view to a sight infinitely more awful - the dreadful scene of Calvary. There is dying, not a dumb animal, but the Son of God, the Creator of the universe. He is not dying the sudden, easy death of the bullock, but the slow, torturous death of crucifixion. And, not like the animal, which is an involuntary victim, he willingly suffers for you and me!¹³

It lies beyond the shadow of all doubt that the burnt offering pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

But then, we read this in Leviticus 1:14:

¹³ Russell Byrum, *Shadows Of Good Things or The Gospel In Type* (Anderson: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1922), p. 85. The author is fully aware of the length of this particular quote, but due to the mental image it provides and the beautiful comparison it makes, felt it entirely necessary to include uncut.

“14 If his offering to the Lord is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons” (Lev. 1:14). ESV

On the surface it would appear that verse 14 is a mistake. We have just gone through a long list of Biblical texts bearing out the fact that through his death, Jesus became a literal sacrifice. Great emphasis has been placed on *how* the offering was to be made, and the condition of the animal to be given. Suddenly we arrive at verse 14 and begin reading about birds! These verses still speak of a burnt sacrifice, yet they leave out some very important parts. As the woman who acted in the old Wendy’s commercials used to say, “Where’s the beef?”

No mention is given concerning an ox, a bull, or even a lamb. Was this a mistake? Has God somehow misspoken? Would God really spend so much time describing how to sacrifice an animal of the herd, only to turn around and accept a bird? The answer is **yes!** God’s great love for man would compel him to make a way for *anyone* who calls upon his name to be saved. The wealthy Israelites would offer bulls. The majority of Israelites would offer lambs and goats, while the poor would offer birds. Once again the Bible teaches us that the heart of God is for **all** mankind, not just a certain few. No matter how large or small, fat or skinny, black or white, what truly matters to God is seeing those he loves saved from sin. Here in the very first chapter of the book of Leviticus, tucked in neatly behind the large animals of the field, the earnest student of the Bible discovers the heart of God! A God who loves his creation so much, and longs to enter into true fellowship and communion with them, that he is willing to accept the life of a bird in place of that man or woman living in sin.

How interesting it is to note that Christ's earthly father and mother when presenting him in the temple for the first time, brought two turtledoves:

"22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" (Lk. 2:22-24). ESV

The best sacrifice that the earthly parents of God's Son could afford was allotted for the poor. What more could God possibly do to win a heart lost in sin? He has made it so that no matter where an individual is physically or financially, they can enjoy a relationship with him. Christopher Wright touches on the depths of God's love:

So then we can see that when we take the Old Testament history seriously in relation to its completion in Jesus Christ, a two-way process is at work, yielding a double benefit in our understanding of the whole Bible. On the one hand, we are able to see the full significance of the Old Testament story in the light of where it leads – the climactic achievement of Christ; and on the other hand, we are able to appreciate the full dimensions of what God did through Christ in the light of his historical declarations and demonstrations of intent in the Old Testament.¹⁴

Jesus Christ is able to impart *life* because he willingly chose the office of sacrificial Lamb.

¹⁴ Christopher J.H. Wright, Knowing Jesus Through The Old Testament (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 33.

Chapter Two

The Grain Offering

“¹ When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it ² and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. ³ But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the Lord's food offerings” (Lev. 2:1-3). ESV

Chapter two of the book of Leviticus deals with the grain or *meal* offering. This offering was completely bloodless, and dealt entirely with ground grain. The King James Version of the Bible uses the word *meat* offering, which is translated into *meal*. The Freedictionary.com offers the following definition for meal:

The edible whole or coarsely ground grains of a cereal grass. A granular substance produced by grinding.¹⁵

In the original Hebrew, the word *meat* means a bloodless, voluntary sacrifice or offering. Depending on the sacrifice, it can denote either animal or grain. In either case, the meaning of the sacrifice remained the same. It was a *freewill* offering given out of a heart bent on pleasing the Lord. A good example of the comparison between grain and meat is found in Genesis 4:

“² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground (Gen. 4:2-3). ESV

Cain's offering 'of the fruit of the ground' carries the same meaning as the Hebrew word *meat*. Cain's offering could consist of what Cain did for a living. The Bible teaches that Cain was a 'tiller of the ground.' Therefore, 'fruit of the

¹⁵ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/meal> (accessed December 10, 2013)

ground' is what Cain would have offered the Lord. No meat was involved in Cain's offering, yet the word offering in Genesis 4:3 is the same word used in Leviticus 2:1. A better rendering for the word meat in Leviticus chapter 2 would be meal or grain, since that is the type of offering that is being discussed.

As concerning the reason why this type of offering would be given, we need only look back to our example in Genesis chapter 3. There the Bible says that 'in the process of time' Cain brought an offering. Cain was only able to bring an offering of the fruit of the ground, after he had received his harvest. A grain offering then, is an offering that would be given to God in gratitude for a bountiful harvest, or in other words, offering thanks to God for the goodness and mercy bestowed upon his children.

Several different scriptures within the Old Testament reveal that the grain offering was always to follow the burnt offering.

“*39 One lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. 40 And with the first lamb a tenth seah of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. 41 The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord. 42 It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. 43 There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory” (Ex. 29:39-43). ESV*

It is of extreme importance to note in this text, that an offering of a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the evening was to include a grain offering. Numerous other scriptures testify to this fact. But to truly understand God's intention in combining the burnt offering and the grain, we must first comprehend the grain offering and its several parts as expounded by William Brown:

First, a meat offering of flour, upon which oil has been poured. Second, a meat offering baked in the oven, consisting of unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil. Third, a meat offering of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil, and baked in a pan. When baked it was parted in pieces, and oil poured on it, the oil being used as butter is with us on bread. Fourth, a meat offering made of fine flour, with oil, and baked in the frying pan. Fifth, a meat offering of first fruits with oil and frankincense.¹⁶

The 'fine flour' mentioned in the second chapter of Leviticus would have been the best finely sifted flour that could be obtained. Flour free from impurities that would have been fit for a King. As in the case with the burnt offering, the Israelite must keep the end result in mind. To fully enjoy the benefits of the grain offering, the bearer must first ensure that they offer their best. God is never satisfied with second best. The fine flour would have oil poured over top of it, with a touch of frankincense added, then presented to the priest in a bowl. David, Luke and John each refer to frankincense as being an emblem of prayer. In essence, the Israelite was offering God the best they had combined with a symbol of his Spirit mingled with prayer. That type of offering brought a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord.

Then in verses 11-13 of Leviticus 2, God introduces three distinct but separate ingredients that we will examine individually:

“11 No grain offering that you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the Lord. 12 As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the Lord, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. 13 You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt” (Lev. 2:11-13). ESV

¹⁶ William Brown, The Tabernacle Its Priests And Its Services (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), p. 121.

The first ingredient mentioned that was not permitted to be burned in the grain offering is leaven. The Hebrew word for leaven means “to ferment.” On the night of the Passover, God offered Moses and the Israelites very specific instructions on how they should prepare and eat the Passover feast:

“8 They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Ex. 12:8). ESV

Unleavened bread means bread prepared without leaven or yeast. Thirteen times in the New Testament, leaven is revealed as an emblem of corruption producing an evil, worldly-minded heart. A truth that Paul described in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

“6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:6-8). ESV

That leaven is likened to sin is a concept that Michael Houdmann expands in his comments concerning the significance of unleavened bread:

In the Bible, leaven is almost always symbolic of sin. Like leaven which permeates the whole lump of dough, sin will spread in a person, a church or a nation, eventually overwhelming and bringing its participants into its bondage and eventually to death. Whenever a little bit of sin in a person or a church is permitted, overlooked, and compromised, it works much like leaven in bread. It will eventually leaven the whole lump, affecting the whole church or the whole world. This permitted sin will lead to other sins and will eventually draw a person or church completely outside of the will and favor of our Father, and our Savior, Jesus Christ.¹⁷

Once again we discover the book of Leviticus revealing the heart of God for all mankind. It is not by accident that Paul and other New Testament writers were

¹⁷ Michael Houdmann, [What Is The Significance Of Unleavened Bread?](http://www.gotquestions.org/unleavened-bread.html#ixzz2p4kx8wq7) <http://www.gotquestions.org/unleavened-bread.html#ixzz2p4kx8wq7> (accessed December 31, 2013).

able to make the comparison between leavened and unleavened bread, as well as the significant differences between them. That knowledge was gleaned through an in-depth study on an Old Testament book written thousands of years in the past. As it was for the Israelite of old so it is for modern man today; permitting sin to permeate one's heart and life will always produce separation from God.

The second ingredient mentioned in Leviticus 2:11-13 that was not permitted to be burned in the grain offering is honey. Honey produces acidity and too much honey can cause the body to purge. In a warm climate, honey would ferment. Fermentation means a breakdown of molecules. It must also be remembered that the grain offering was one of the more frequently received offerings by the priest. Too much honey could produce sickness in the priesthood. However, like leaven, honey also has some very specific detriments besides the more obvious as revealed by Rabbi Baruch in *Rediscovering the Old Testament*:

Now the great Middle Ages Rabbi Maimonides offered an answer that does hold some water; and it is that in every other ancient Middle Eastern culture known, in fact honey WAS used.....it was CALLED for.....in religious activities (particularly in sacrifices to gods), simply because it was so rare and valued. Therefore, God's prohibition for the Israelites AGAINST the use of honey in sacrifices was to separate Israel's behaviour and rituals from all others. And as we go about our walk with the Lord, we need to factor that principle into our decision-making.¹⁸

Honey, a substance compared to sensuality, was widely used in idolatrous pagan religions during the time of Moses and the Israelites.

¹⁸ Rabbi Baruch Shalom Ashlag, *Rediscovering The Old Testament* <http://www.torahclass.com/old-testament-studies/36-old-testament-studies-leviticus/156-lesson-4-chapter2> (accessed December 31, 2013).

When the student of the Bible gains a better understanding of the information contained within God's law to Moses, it lies beyond reason that those same warnings and prohibitions would also materialize in some form within the context of the New Testament age of grace. Holiness, purity, and abstinence from even the very appearance of evil is a God ordained worldview for his people that cannot be relegated to the Old Testament or viewed as outdated legalism. God would have a holy people who are willing to sacrifice their own wants and desires in order that they might reflect a positive light back on their Redeemer. This is a continuous theme throughout the Bible that is very much alive in the 21st century.

The third ingredient mentioned in Leviticus 2:11-13 that was to never be left out of a grain offering was salt. Salt is of course a preservative whose function is completely opposite that of honey and leaven. Whereas honey and leaven would add to an offering's fermentation, salt would protect the offering and keep it from fermentation. When viewed in a physical sense, salt as a preservative of food is obvious. But when viewed in a spiritual sense, this compound takes on an entirely new light.

The Bible makes reference to salt 33 times, but none of those references are as important as the one mentioned in the book of Leviticus. Here, God makes a connection between offerings made by fire with the seasoning of salt, and calls that act the salt of the covenant.

At this time in world history, it was customary for contracts (or covenants) to be sealed via the sharing of a meal. During this meal salt would be used as an act of showing each respective individual's acceptance of the contract.

In this way, God would have grain offerings seasoned with salt, showing his acceptance of the gift and lending the idea that God ate with man.

Thus a covenant of salt was a covenant of holiness, or a covenant of purity. Man, by bringing a free will grain offering was giving God the best he had. When placed upon the fire and seasoned with salt, man was entering into a covenant with God vowing to always offer him their best and follow a clean, pure standard of living. A God ordained lifestyle that would set the individual apart from other nations whose gods were made of wood and stone. Holy contributions viewed by God as a perpetual due:

“19 All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the Lord I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord for you and for your offspring with you” (Num. 18:19). ESV

“5 Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? (2 Chron. 13:5) ESV

This was a binding, unchangeable covenant of purity that implied God’s faithfulness to man.

The annual use of salt in the United States is over 14 million tons or about 200 tons per person. The average use of salt in the United States as a seasoning per household is about 6 pounds per person. There are seemingly endless uses for salt. It is used to purify water, as a bicarbonate remedy when someone is ill, it’s found in soap and shaving cream as well as brushes and combs. Salt plays an enormous role in our lives.

Yet, for as large a role as salt plays in our physical lives, it plays an even greater role in our spiritual well being with God.

“13 You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet” (Mt. 5:13). ESV

“49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another” (Mk. 9:49-50). ESV

It is imperative to note whom Christ is addressing in these verses. A thorough reading will reveal that he is addressing his own followers. Christians (of any age) are to be peacemakers who have been transformed by the blood of a pure, unblemished sacrifice. According to Jesus Christ, each and every believer should possess a Christ-like character and lead a Christ-like life. Christ would have his children live in such a manner so that by their very lifestyle the enemy is defeated.

At the beginning of this chapter we said that before the grain offering could truly be understood, each of its individual parts needed to be discussed. Now that we have accomplished that what have we learned?

- That a grain offering always followed a burnt offering
- That the grain offering consisted of the finest flour obtainable, combined with pure olive oil and frankincense
- That the grain offering was never to have honey or leaven since they would lead to fermentation
- That the grain offering was to always be seasoned with salt

The grain offering was bloodless so it did not have to do with cleansing from sin. Going back to the original word for meat offering, we discover the word minchah, which expresses the idea of devotedness. It was a free will offering given out of a clean heart expressing thanks to God for his blessings.

The grain offering then is a second step where the newly claimed Christian offers back to God the best they possess after having received forgiveness from sin. Consecration to God is available only after the sinner receives forgiveness and pardon from their sin.

Bob Deffinbaugh connects the grain offering of Leviticus with the church of the 21st century:

We live under the New Covenant, not under the old. Does this mean that obedience is no longer vital to us? Far from it! You will remember that in our Lord's testing in the wilderness, Satan sought to get Him to make a stone into bread. Our Lord's response was to rebuke Satan, based upon the statement in Deuteronomy 8 that man shall not live by bread alone. There is a sense, then, that we must not only, once for all, look to our Lord as our Savior, but we must look to Him daily as our sustainer. In John chapter 15 this daily dependence is described as abiding in Him, as a branch abides in the vine. Just as the Israelites were constantly reminded of their dependence on God by the Grain Offering, so we must also be daily reminded of our dependence upon Christ. Much of our abiding in Him is that of abiding in His word, the bread of life.¹⁹

Through the grain offering, God reveals the importance of not only finding forgiveness from sin, but also offering our life back to the One who offered his life for us.

¹⁹ Bob Deffinbaugh, The Grain Offering <https://bible.org/seriespage/grain-offering-leviticus-21-16-614-18-79-10-1012-13> (accessed December 31, 2013).

Chapter Three

The Peace Offering

“¹ If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord. ² And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. ³ And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the Lord, he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, ⁴ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. ⁵ Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord” (Lev. 3:1-5). ESV

Chapter 3 takes us yet another step further in our walk with God. In the burnt offering we discovered forgiveness from sin. In the grain offering, the newly repentant soul offers themselves back to God who, in turn, equips and provides the infilling of his Spirit. In this chapter, those same individuals realize true joy and fulfillment that can only come from God.

The Hebrew word for peace is *shelem*, which means a voluntary sacrifice of thanks. If we were to translate that word into its fullest sense, there we would find *zabah shelamin*, which means the sacrifice of unity or completeness. In essence, to offer a peace offering is to offer praise to God for his close relationship with man. Here we find the Israelites being given instructions on how to properly offer God an offering of joy. The ISBE provides even greater detail:

Shelem shelamim: "peace offering," generally used the plural, shelamim, only once shelem (Amos 5:22). These were sacrifices of friendship expressing or promoting peaceful relations with the Deity, and almost invariably accompanied by a meal or feast, an occasion of great joy. They are sometimes called zebhachim, sometimes zebhach shelamim, and were of different kinds, such as zebhach ha-todhah, "thank offerings,"

which expressed the gratitude of the giver because of some blessings, zebhach nedhabhah, "free-will offerings," bestowed on the Deity out of a full heart, and zebhach nedher, "votive offerings," which were offered in fulfillment of a vow.²⁰

Peace offerings were sacrifices of friendship expressing or promoting peaceful relations with God. What an amazing concept! A concept that contains an even deeper revelation of God. Since from before the beginning of time, God has longed for communion with mankind. Jeremiah wrote that God has loved us with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). A love that motivated God to create mankind in his own image, and place them in a Garden Paradise. Creation speaks of God's wondrous work on earth. The crowning work of that creation is man.

Proof of this can be seen in the early chapters of the book of Genesis, where God walked with his creation in the cool of the day. Matt Slick of CARM ministries says that:

This implies closeness, intimacy, and communion. Picture this. Adam and Eve and God literally walking next to each other in perfect harmony. Why did God walk with them? Because He loved them. Because He wanted fellowship with them.²¹

Creator God longs for intimacy, closeness, and communion with his creation, because he loves us!

A love that was far deeper and wider than original sin. A love that would reveal the heart of God for all ages of time; to the point of shedding an animal's blood and offering the very first sacrifice:

²⁰ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

²¹ Matt Slick, *Why Did God Make You?* <http://carm.org/christianity/sermons/1-corinthians-19-why-did-god-make-you> (accessed January 1, 2014).

“²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them (Gen. 3:21). ESV

Almighty God refused to allow sin to separate him from those he loved, so he took it upon himself to provide a means of reconciliation based upon a mystery that took form within heaven itself. John D. Morris of the Institute For Creation Research describes God’s love for man:

In a more ultimate sense, God knew that man's sin would force His only begotten Son to die an unthinkably horrid death in sacrificial payment for man's sin, and that ungrateful man would even carry out the execution. In order to accomplish this fully sufficient sacrifice, the Son willingly set aside aspects of His deity, and "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7), forever limiting Himself to bodily form. Why would He do this? If we had not been created, it would not have been necessary. Why did He create us? [Because] in His love He desired reciprocal love, so He created man in His own image. Man was given the ability to respond to God's love or reject it. In the beginning man enjoyed full fellowship with God, but soon rejected Him, bringing the ruination of all creation. This wasn't God's intention, so He implemented His plan for creation to fulfill its intended purpose.²²

That ‘plan’ implemented by God for creation found it’s complete fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, the laws God gave to Moses to present to the Israelites, reveal shadows of greater things to come. God ‘so loved’ the world that he was willing to provide them with the means of entering into complete and perfect fellowship with him!

Something that should stand out to us within the first few verses of Leviticus 3 is the fact that the peace offering could be given using either a male or a female animal for sacrifice. This was not an offering for transgressions; it was an offering of thankfulness. Due to this fact, the individual presenting the peace offering could bring either a male or a female animal. What doesn’t

²² John D. Morris, Why Did God Create Us? <http://www.icr.org/articles/view/537/215/> (accessed January 1, 2014).

change in the peace offering is the fact that the animal being offered still had to be without blemish. This is still an offering being presented to God that would be burned upon the altar, which, as R.C. Sproul says, “could be given any time people wanted to celebrate the peace they enjoyed with God.”²³

The manner in which the various parts of the animal given in sacrifice were to be divided, once again reveal the heart of God for all mankind, not simply one particular nation or age. In verse 3 we are told that the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails is to be offered to God. The fat of the animal was the most prized portion of meat. Herein is where the greatest taste lies. Anyone who has grilled a steak over an open fire knows how juicy and tender the fat can be. This is the portion God would have removed and offered to him. Once again we find God requiring our best. The Hebrew word for fat is cheleb, which means choicest, best, or abundance. Matthew Henry offers a more in-depth look at why God expected the fat of the sacrifice:

Now the burning of this fat is supposed to signify the offering up of our good affections to God in all our prayers and praises. God must have the inwards; for we must pour out our souls, and lift up our hearts, in prayer, and must bless his name with all that is within us. It is required that we be inward with God in everything wherein we have to do with him. The fat denotes the best and choicest, which must always be devoted to God, who has made for us a feast of fat things.²⁴

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown tell of a species of sheep in the east whose tail alone was four and a half feet across. Sheep that weighed 60 to 70 pounds and most often found themselves lying across the altar in sacrifice to God.

²³ R. C. Sproul, The Peace Offering <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/peace-offering/> (accessed January 1, 2014).

²⁴ Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.

Understanding what kind of sheep was offered to God shows just how great of a sacrifice the peace offering truly was. These were not sickly runts that no one else wanted. These were large healthy animals that could have brought the owner profit had they been sold. The size of the animal and the fact that it was not allowed to be blemished, shows just how important it is in the eyes of God that we constantly offer him our best.

Then we discover that the two kidneys and the fatty lobe attached to the liver were to be offered in sacrifice as well. This would appear to be a very strange command, until one gains a better understanding of the times in which the Israelites lived. The kidneys were viewed as the seat of the emotions. Pause and consider just where a person's emotions are felt the most. The brain is 'command central' where decisions are made, but butterfly's form in the stomach.

When a person becomes nervous over a decision, or frightened when left alone, these emotions are all felt in the intestines. Ulcers that bleed, diarrhea which leads to dehydration, nerves that leave a person feeling like their life has spun out of control; these are all emotional aspects of man that are felt in the intestinal region of the body. Here in the sacrificial peace offering, we find a command to offer up the kidneys to God. Here too, we find God telling us to cast our worries and cares on him!

In the nations surrounding Israel at this time, the liver of an animal was considered an essential organ in fortune telling:

“²¹ For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination. He shakes the arrows; he consults the teraphim; he looks at the liver” (Ezek. 21:21). ESV

This custom was practiced by the Babylonians, the Greeks, and the Romans. They believed that by viewing the liver of a freshly slain animal, they would be able to predict the future. Thus when God instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to include the fatty lobe attached to the liver as part of the peace offering, he’s telling the Israelite to place their hope for the future in him. God wants more than flowery words penned on a pretty paper. He wants all of us. He longs for a people who are willing to offer him the very seat of their emotions, not men and women who half-heartedly follow God when times grow tough.

The peace offering remains much the same throughout the remainder of Leviticus 3, until we reach verse 17:

“¹⁷ It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood” (Lev. 3:17). ESV

We have already discussed why fat was not to be eaten, but now God includes blood. In fact, He prohibits the eating of fat or blood as a perpetual statute throughout their generations. What is so important about the blood?

When Noah and his family exited the Ark following the catastrophic worldwide flood, God gave him a new Magna Charta, or rules to live by. One of those rules for the new world included the abstention from blood:

“³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gen. 9:3-6). ESV

When Noah stepped out onto a new world, one of the very first instructions God gave him was to refrain from eating the blood! Included within those verses we discover that life is in the blood. The life of the animal was literally in its blood. Drain the blood, and life would cease. As it is with the animal, so it is with man. A perfectly healthy individual suffering from no apparent illness will still die, if the blood is drained from their body. Life is truly in the blood. Here we find God placing a strong emphasis on the life of the animal, which is its blood.

Here too, we gain a better understanding of why it was so important to God that an animal offered in sacrifice be unblemished. The animal's life was offered on behalf of the person making the sacrifice. Once the throat of the animal was slit and life began to wane, God would look down and see the blood, blood which would bring about forgiveness from sin. After reconciliation came acceptance. Upon acceptance came consecration. Upon consecration came thankfulness for being given the privilege of entering into a personal relationship with God. However, it should be noted that there can be no offering of peace until blood has been shed and freedom obtained from sin. Because life was in the blood, and blood offered brought about freedom from sin, God commanded Moses to instruct the Israelites to refrain from eating blood. Here too is a clear reference to the importance God placed upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ. An unblemished lamb who gave His life in order that all might be saved.

In Leviticus 7 we find that God, the priest, the priest's children, and the offerer each ate a portion of the peace offering. This was a communion feast showing the unity and fellowship of God and his people. The sprinkling of the

blood in the peace offering was not for acceptance, rather communion.

Communion with God, which can only come after the blood has been shed and new life has been given. Ernie Brown of BibleCentre.org unites the peace offering with our modern age:

Is there anything in the New Testament to justify this assumption that the Peace Offering in Leviticus 3 and 7 and the reference to it in Psalm 40, are intended to give us a picture of something that can only be fully true in the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? The plain answer to that important question is: 'Indeed there is!' The very words from Psalm 40 are quoted verbatim in Hebrews 10:5,6 and 8. The clear exposition there of what Psalm 40 is foretelling is that only in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ can be seen the fulfilment of what Psalm 40 refers to in the offerings. In addition to that, we have a lovely, if a little oblique, reference to the same thing in Ephesians 5:2, where we can justifiably read: "...walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and hath given Himself for us a meal-offering and a peace-offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour". There we have it. These Old Testament pictures are intended to teach us that when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, He laid the only true basis for worship, true worship, and spiritual worship, to arise from worshippers on earth to God in heaven.²⁵

If we truly yearn to enjoy fellowship and communion with God, we must first accept Christ's remedy for our sin. Only after the blood has been applied can we discover unity and peace within.

²⁵ Ernie Brown, The Peace Offering: A Figure Of Fellowship
http://www.biblecentre.org/addresses/eb_the_peace_offering.htm (accessed January 1, 2014).

Chapter Four

The Sin Offering

“¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, ³ if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering” (Lev. 4:1-3). ESV

The beginning of chapter 4 brings with it a change in offerings. Up until this point, the offerings we have discussed have been *freewill* offerings. Offerings brought to God out of a thankful heart for his grace and mercy. We will now be introduced to an entirely new set of reasons as to why an offering should be given. The burnt offering, grain offering, and the peace offering were all acts of worship whereby the one presenting the gift recognized God's goodness. The sin offering is to be brought to God for **specific** acts of sin whether intentional or unintentional.

The first 3 chapters of Leviticus began by describing an offering using much the same language; “*When any one of you brings...*” “*When anyone offers...*” “*When his offering is...*” language denoting an offering brought out of a loving heart. But notice the language used at the beginning of chapter 4, “*If a person sins...*” Don't miss the transition! In chapters 1-3, we find man being shown how to express his thankfulness **to** God. Chapter 4 begins by man being shown how to discover forgiveness **from** God. It's a life cycle! The same cycle used in the 21st century. Man lives in sin ignorant of God and his mercy. Man discovers God and realizes that to be accepted by him, he must first find forgiveness from sin. Upon acceptance by God, man then freely offers his life in

service to God, for providing him forgiveness from his sin. The main difference between the Israelite of old and the Christian of today, is that Christ took on flesh, and by his death became each offering for us, thereby breaking the chains of the old law! Each and every aspect of these offerings pointed forward to Jesus Christ! An in-depth study on the book of Leviticus reveals the types and shadows of Jesus Christ, the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

The point I'm attempting to make by showing the difference in how this chapter begins is that even when it came to sin, God still made a way for the Israelite to find forgiveness! On their own, the Israelites were unable to achieve forgiveness from sin. Knowing this, God provided a means of salvation when no other way could be found. Apart from Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sin would be impossible. There would be no means whereby you or I could offer praise and worship to God out of a heart full of love. Even in our unworthiness, God provided a means whereby man could be brought back into his presence.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word used for sin in verse 2, *chata*, means to miss the mark or to incur guilt. When we think of sin today, we think of bold vicious acts of violence performed out of anger. Society has taught us to categorize sin in such a way that almost nothing is wrong and everything is right. But when is the last time we earnestly took it into consideration that a person could incur guilt unknowingly? The very fact that an offering for *unintentional sin* existed, shows the great lengths God is willing to go to see us live for him!

Carl Keil and Friedrich Delitzsch, offer a fascinating commentary on just how important mankind is to God:

This sentence, which stands at the head of the laws for the sin-offerings, shows that the sin-offerings did not relate to sin or sinfulness in general, but to particular manifestations of sin, to certain distinct actions performed by individuals, or by the whole congregation. Sinning "in error" is not merely sinning through ignorance, hurry; want of consideration, or carelessness, but also sinning unintentionally; hence all such sins as spring from the weakness of flesh and blood, as distinguished from sins committed with a high (elevated) hand, or in haughty, defiant rebellion against God and His commandments.²⁶

Such an offering should also cause mankind to realize just how loving and kind God is compared to the vileness of sin. God is an unchanging God. The Bible teaches us that He is the same yesterday, today and forever. In much the same manner, sin whether it is committed intentionally or unintentionally, remains sin. The Israelite did not live under an Age of Grace. Because of that, God made a way for the Israelite to find forgiveness from sin, even when that *sin* was committed without their knowledge.

Another point that should not be overlooked is the Hebrew word for unintentionally; that word is *shegagah*. *Shegagah* means an inadvertent transgression. In a literal sense the sin offering was to be given for *chata shegagah*, or missing the mark inadvertently. However, for as ambiguous as that may sound, the sin offering did contain definite boundaries:

“27 If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. 28 And the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. 29 You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. 30 But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he has despised the word of the Lord

²⁶ Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him" (Num. 15:27-31). ESV

We can clearly see from these verses that a person's heart plays an enormous role in their stance with God. Reckless acts of sin committed from a defiant heart caused a person to be completely cut off from among their people. Whereas a sin committed inadvertently could be forgiven. This too should bring to light another point in our mind; that for as vile and wicked as man in the 21st century may be, there is nothing they can do that God cannot forgive them for! No matter how deep in sin man may sink; God has already been there and provided a way out! Megory Anderson and Philip Culbertson shine even more light on an offering that meant so much to God:

The relationship with God, and its systematic expression through ritual, involved every aspect of one's life, from thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth, to the marking of significant stages in the life of an individual, to the process of expressing repentance for having violated God's will. The motivation for these offerings was not fear of a wrathful God, but love and obedience for a God who created the world and chose Israel as the means for its redemption. Israel understood the world God created to be good, and the people created to serve God. Obedience to God's will meant choosing to give expression and encouragement to the good, and to guard against the bad.²⁷

Understanding God's motivation for providing the sin offering reveals God's heart for all mankind! Contained within the laws God gave to Moses for the nation of Israel, we find a God who longs to enter into communion with his creation, not an evil ogre bent on destroying the first soul that steps out of line. This is nothing less than God acting in history to redeem fallen man!

²⁷ Megory Anderson and Philip Culbertson, "The Inadequacy of the Christian Doctrine of Atonement in Light of Levitical Sin Offering" *Anglican Theological Review* 68.4 (1986): 303-328. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials* (accessed January 5, 2014).

Israelite sacrifice is not a matter of serving God or procuring benefits. A more Biblical understanding of sacrifice ... is that by sacrifice communion with the Deity is established.²⁸

Communion with God that man on his own could never enjoy; hence the importance of verse 3:

“3 if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering” (Lev. 4:3). ESV

That the *anointed priest* (or High Priest) could sin unintentionally, carried a great deal of guilt indeed. This was God’s man to Israel, and Israel’s man to God. It was the High Priest who entered the holy of holies once each year to make atonement for Israel. It was the High Priest who bore the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on his breast. It was the job of the High Priest to intercede to God on behalf of Israel. Just how damaging could the sin of the High Priest be? The answer is found in verse 3 as well, “*bringing guilt on the people.*” Should the High Priest *miss the mark* inadvertently, it would have a ripple effect on the entire nation! Should the High Priest unknowingly commit an act of sin, which in turn caused Israel to sin, the Priest bore the burden alone. Albert Barnes notes that, “the whole nation is concerned in every transgression of its representative.”²⁹

Once again we discover the book of Leviticus revealing the shadow of Jesus Christ as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Bible very plainly teaches that Jesus Christ took on the office of High Priest to redeem fallen man from their sin.

²⁸ Elmer A. Martens, God’s Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), p 56.

²⁹ Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

“17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:17-18). ESV

“11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11-12). ESV

The very first sacrifice mentioned in Leviticus 4 pertains to the High Priest. By assuming the role of High Priest, Jesus Christ stood as a representative for the entire race of human beings. How important does it become then, that Jesus Christ was perfect and without sin? Christ’s ability to become the perfect sacrifice for sin, hinged on his ability to remain free and pure from the sin, which had brought separation between God and man.

“21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). ESV

“5 You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin” (1 Jn. 3:5). ESV

Unlike the earthly High Priest who lived under the old Mosaic Law, Jesus Christ was able to take on a form he had never known, live as one of us, breath as one of us, and experience human emotions as one of us, yet remain free from the disease of sin! How is this possible? Because the blood that flowed through his veins was provided by God himself!

“28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). ESV

Luke would have his readers understand the excellence of the blood Christ shed, as if it were the very blood of God.

The Plan of Salvation called for God to come in the flesh to be a sacrifice for our sins. To do this Jesus took on an additional nature — a Human nature — while He still kept His Godly nature. This is why we can see Jesus performing miracles and at the same time tempted and suffering. Now the difference here is that the earthly high priest sinned. Jesus did not yet He died because of sin (yours and mine not His. Isaiah 53 is again helpful in understanding this). It's like the owner of a railroad buying a ticket – he doesn't need one. So he has a ticket he can give away to someone who can't afford to buy his or her own. Because Jesus died even though He didn't have to, He has a "free ticket" that we can use to pay for our sins.³⁰

A God-Man, who knew no sin, yet was willing to take on the role of God's High Priest and become sin on behalf of those who were helpless to find forgiveness on their own!

The High Priest was to offer his animal in much the same manner as prior offerings, the main difference being, that the Priest himself was to actually take the blood into the Tabernacle. There were two rooms found within the Tabernacle; the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The Holy Place housed the table of shewbread, the golden candlestick, and the altar of incense, while the Most Holy Place contained the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. Separating the two rooms was a very ornate veil made of fine linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, that had angels embroidered on it. It was this veil that was rent in two upon Christ's death.

The Priest was to take a portion of the blood into the Tabernacle and sprinkle some of the blood seven times in the direction of this veil. Why?

³⁰ Bible Study Planet, Jesus, Our High Priest Forever <http://biblestudyplanet.com/jesus-our-high-priest-forever/> (accessed January 7, 2014).

It was at the Mercy Seat where God promised to meet and communion with the Israelites. There too shone God's Shekinah Glory! Sprinkling the blood seven times towards the Mercy Seat was symbolic of finding complete forgiveness from sin.

After this, the Priest was to take some of the blood and place it on the horns of the altar of sweet incense. This altar stood directly in front of the veil leading to the Most Holy Place, whose purpose was to burn incense before God. By placing blood on the horns of the altar, the Priest typified a life of devotion before God. David understood this and ask God to:

“2 Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” (Ps. 141:2). ESV

It should be noted that forgiveness from sin comes at the point of God's mercy! Once forgiveness has been found, the newborn babe should then devote the remainder of their life to the One who set them free. The altar of incense also “reminds us that God has the power and strength to deliver us through all trials, no matter how terrible.”³¹

Once the rite of the sin offering was complete inside the Tabernacle, the Priest would then walk out to the altar of burnt offering and pour out the blood that remained at the base. In this way he was acknowledging that it was his blood that should have been poured out, not the blood of the animal given in sacrifice. Here too, we are given yet another portrait of Christ. He loved not his life but poured out his soul unto death.

³¹ Outline Bible Resources What The Bible Says About The Tabernacle (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1997), p. 137.

Following the rite of pouring the blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering, the Priest was then commanded to carry all of the animal's flesh, entrails, head and legs, outside the camp to a clean place and burn it with fire. Not one piece of the sin offering was to be eaten. The entire animal was to be carried *outside the camp*, revealing the awfulness of sin.

Since the sin of the Priest was transferred to the animal, the animal then became unclean, and was unfit to remain in God's sight. It must be carried outside of the camp and burned! The writer of the book of Hebrews had the sin offering in mind when he wrote chapter 13:

“10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. 12 So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. 13 Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured” (Heb. 13:10-13). ESV

What an honor and privilege mankind has been given! Jesus Christ became a sin offering for the sin of the world. Because of this, God was unable to look upon him, thus he suffered outside in the black of night, separated from all fellowship with Father God. There Christ poured out his life in order that you and I might live.

Further reflection upon the 4th chapter of Leviticus reveals a sin offering for more than just the High Priest. Verses 13-15 describe the process of a sin offering for the *whole congregation* or the entire nation of Israel as a whole. Should the entire nation sin in error without prior realization, they were to make a sin offering as soon as the error was made known. A representative from each

Israelite tribe would lay their hands upon the head of the sacrifice. In this way, it would be viewed as if the nation itself were performing the sin offering.

The 3rd individual mentioned in the sin offering, is the ruler. This individual would either be the judge of a tribe or a representative of one. His sin, having less of an effect on the nation as a whole, brought some differences in how the offering was made. The ruler could present a *kid of the goats* instead of a bull, and it was not necessary to take the animal's blood into the Tabernacle.

The final group of individuals mentioned in Leviticus 4, are the 'common' men and women. The process for the common man and woman to find forgiveness differed greatly than any of the prior groups mentioned. These individuals could bring a she-goat, which would be far less expensive to obtain. Here again we are shown the mercy and grace of a God willing to provide a means of forgiveness even for those individuals who cannot afford the best. The sin offering proves that "just as no segment of the Israelite community may sin with impunity, so no segment lies outside of the realm of grace."³²

Inadvertently missing the mark should cause each and every child of God to take a step back and consider the life they are living. What may appear to be very little and insignificant to us, could cause great distress within the family of God. David must have thought about this constantly for in Psalms 19 he wrote:

"¹² Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression" (Ps. 19:12-13). ESV

May God truly awaken such awareness within us today.

³² Paul R. House, Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p 130.

Chapter Five

The Trespass Offering

The Bible takes us straight from the sin offering of Chapter 4, directly into the trespass offering of chapter 5. It would be very easy to reach the conclusion that the translators placed the beginning of chapter 5 in the wrong place, since there appears to be no difference in wording until verse 14. There the Bible says, “then the Lord spoke to Moses saying.” This is how chapter 4 began as well. Moving slightly ahead, chapter 6 begins relatively the same; “and the Lord spoke to Moses saying.” So why does there appear to be a lack of separation between the offerings? The answer is both simple and complicated at the same time. The answer is complicated in the fact that there are very distinct differences between the offerings, yet simple when looked upon as being one half of a whole. Say for example, a person was to get a sheet of paper and draw a circle on it, and then took a pair of scissors and cut the circle in half. The result would be two halves which, when placed back together would form a whole. For the sake of illustration, let’s name one of those halves the sin offering, and the other half the trespass offering. Each offering very distinct from the other, each one performing its own separate work, yet each one needing the other to make it complete.

The sin offering reveals the picture of Christ saving mankind from sin, while the trespass offering presents a picture of Christ fulfilling God’s requirement of punishment for the sin that transgressed his law. On the cross, Jesus Christ not only performed a work that reached down to man, but he also performed a

work that reached up to his Father. His reach downward was to free mankind from sin, while his reach upward justified man in the eyes of God. While the trespass offering is very distinct from the sin offering, both are necessary for they speak of a vital work of the heart that only Christ himself could perform.

“¹ If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity” (Lev. 5:1). ESV

Should an Israelite witness another Israelite’s crime, or is made aware of someone’s crime, yet refuses to tell the proper authorities when they know, that individual bears the guilt for their silence. God looks upon refusing to share information that could free the innocent or implicate the guilty as being sin! The sin isn’t in possessing the knowledge; the sin is in refusing to share the knowledge.

“²⁴ The partner of a thief hates his own life; he hears the curse, but discloses nothing” (Prov. 29:24). ESV

Witnessing a crime being committed and refusing to tell the proper authorities makes that person guilty of the crime as well.

“² or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt; ³ or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt” (Lev. 5:2-3). ESV

The defilement spoken of in these verses is two-fold. On one hand they point to the importance of cleanliness, while on the other, they speak of ceremonial uncleanness. God is a holy God who inhabits the worship and praise of a holy people. Neither the Israelite, nor any man or woman today can expect to stand

before God in our unrighteousness. The Bible is very plain in calling our righteousness as nothing more than ‘filthy rags.’

Before a ceremonially unclean Israelite could stand in the presence of a holy God, he/she had to make some form of restitution. In other words, it is impossible to come before God while still bearing the stains of the world. The shed blood of Jesus Christ removes the stain of sin and enables us to be presentable to God! Sin defiles. Each individual man and woman must take the necessary steps to be cleansed from it.

“4 or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these” (Lev. 5:4). ESV

The best way to describe this verse would be to recall the old adage that says, “Think before you speak.”

“6 Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?” (Eccl. 5:6) ESV

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger (Jas. 1:19). ESV

Take note of the fact that a person was considered guilty whether their oath was for *good* or *evil*. It is very easy in the ‘heat of the moment’ to say something rash with no intentions of ever following through. But in God’s eyes, it is just as evil to promise to do something good and **never** follow through. James was right when he compared the tongue to a world of iniquity. It was the tongue that caused the Israelite to sin, and it is still the tongue today that causes many a man and woman to stumble and fall.

“5 when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed, 6 he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin” (Lev. 5:5-6). ESV

The important thing to note in these verses is the fact that the individual must **confess** that they had sinned! Before forgiveness can be given, there must first be a confession of the sin. And yet, before there can be a confession of the sin, the guilty party must be truly repentant for the sin committed. It's an evil cycle, and not one that many people are willing to endure. Far too many people view confession as a weakness, while the Bible clearly states that pride goes before a fall. The Israelite must not only realize that he/she has sinned, but they must be willing to repent of that sin and confess it before God. It should be noted that the steps back to God for the Israelite, are the same steps to be taken by those seeking Christ today. Realize our sin, repent of our sin, and then confess our sin to God.

“7 But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. 8 He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering. He shall wring its head from its neck but shall not sever it completely, 9 and he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering. 10 Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the rule. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven” (Lev. 5:7-10).
ESV

Once again, God's mercy is shown in the provision of two turtledoves or two young pigeons. Note too, the steps taken; the sin offering then the burnt offering. Acceptance to God always comes at the point of forgiveness.

“¹¹ But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. ¹² And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful of it as its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, on the Lord's food offerings; it is a sin offering. ¹³ Thus the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed in any one of these things, and he shall be forgiven. And the remainder shall be for the priest, as in the grain offering” (Lev. 5:11-13).
ESV

These verses once again prove that no one is beyond the reach of God!

Forgiveness from the aforementioned sins could be found by bringing a lamb or a goat. If that wasn't possible, the guilty party could bring two turtledoves or two pigeons. If that wasn't possible, the accused could bring approximately two quarts of flour. By the grace of God, there should never be anyone taught to believe that God cannot forgive them.

“¹⁴ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁵ "If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord, he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. ¹⁶ He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven” (Lev. 5:14-16).
ESV

It is at this point that we begin making the two halves discussed earlier in this chapter, become one whole. The phrase “commits a breach of faith” applies both to the responsibility of the one who committed the sin, and the guilt that would be applied to him/her because of the trespass. The one who committed the sin needed forgiveness (sin-offering), and also needed to make restitution to the one who was offended (trespass offering).

Two separate offerings, performing two distinct purposes, yet operating as one. Here the heart of God for all mankind is revealed yet again! Jesus Christ willingly took the place of the one who committed the trespass (sin offering), and by his death, burial, and resurrection, made restitution to the One offended (trespass offering). Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer identify Christ in the Old Testament office of sacrifice:

Leviticus is the primary source in the Old Testament for regulations on sacrifice and how properly to offer sacrifices to God. The last two (sin and guilt offerings) were used to provide expiation from sin. Expiation is the purging of impurity caused by sin. It results in the removal of guilt, the granting of forgiveness, and the restoration of the fellowship between the sinner and God. Here God established the spiritual principle that life itself, not some lesser gift, must be returned to him for the purpose of atoning for sin. The exact meaning of the Hebrew word for atonement (*kipper*) is uncertain. But it somehow means the animal's sacrifice ransomed the sinner from the death which the sinner deserved. The New Testament asserts that the death of Jesus Christ is now the sacrifice that makes atonement for sin.³³

It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew word for trespass is *ma'al* which means to act covertly or treacherously. Should a person fail in their duty or service to the Lord, even if it was unintentional, it was looked upon as being treacherous. What constituted a trespass? Not giving God something that was rightfully his, such as failing to consecrate or redeem the first born, withholding first fruits or tithes, not fulfilling a vow. God wanted the Israelite to know that he was instituting these laws for their own good.

Note the careful order of the steps in the trespass offering. A sin committed intentional or unintentional; confession of sin; the offering of a ram for forgiveness along with monetary fees and a fine. Fees are paid, fines are given,

³³ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, Encountering The Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1999), p.124-125.

a ram is offered and forgiveness is obtained. Thank God for the sin/trespass offering of his only Son Jesus Christ!

“¹⁷ If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸ He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. ¹⁹ It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the Lord” (Lev. 5:17-19). ESV

The chapter ends by discussing the sin of a person who does something forbidden by the commandments of God. This could be anything that violates God's will. Unknowingly eating fat or eating from a dish that is ceremonially unclean. In God's eyes, ignorance does not eliminate the act from being a sin. Sin is a wrong done to God and man. Restitution must be sought and made.

The bloody sacrifices, and especially the sin offerings, prefigured the offering of Christ for the sins of men. The animals were innocent, so was He who died, not for His own, but others' sins. The animals were without blemish, and He whom they typified was “without spot,” “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” The offerer put his hands on the head of the devoted animal, symbolically transferring his guilt to it. On Jesus hath been laid “the iniquity of us all.” The animals were slain. He is the Lamb of God “slain from the foundation of the world.” They bled. Behold the blood flowing from the pierced side of the Redeemer. This speaks to us with no uncertain sound of the “great sacrifice,” and of His precious blood as that alone which can give peace to a troubled conscience ... “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”³⁴

³⁴ William Brown, The Tabernacle Its Priests And Its Services (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), p. 126-127.

Chapter Six

Atonement Through Blood

Atonement

“³⁴ And this shall be a statute forever for you that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Moses did as the Lord commanded him” (Lev. 16:34). ESV

We come now to one of the most important, if not the most important chapters in the book of Leviticus as a whole. The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur as it is known today, was a day in which the High Priest would perform some of the most meaningful and symbolic works written about in the law; namely, the forgiveness of sin for the entire nation of Israel.

When a Christian truly begins to understand just how vile sin is in the eyes of God, it is then they realize how helpless they are to find forgiveness from it. Multiply one person’s sin three million times, and you begin to gain a sense of what the High Priest must have felt on the Day of Atonement.

What thoughts must have been running through Aaron’s mind as the sun began to rise on Atonement Day? How would a man feel knowing that although he wasn’t bringing forgiveness of sin in and of himself, still yet, the success or failure of that day depended greatly on how well he performed the commands received by God. Each time he offered a sacrifice or made a change of clothes, it pointed to a greater work to come. The weight must have been unbearable. Make one mistake in offering a sacrifice here, forget to make a change of clothes there, and Israel could very well be forced to bear the consequences of their sin.

That God would include a Day of Atonement within the scope of the law proves how horrible the sin of man is, and how inadequate the blood of bulls and goats were. Keep in mind that the book of Leviticus begins by describing in great detail the offerings an individual could make as a means of finding forgiveness from sin. Yet, even with those laws and offerings in place, God still saw the need for an annual Day of Atonement.

This not only points to man's inability to live according to God's prescribed law, but also reveals just how temporary and ineffectual the blood of animals truly was. If mankind could keep God's commands through his own power and strength, then there would be no need for animal sacrifice. If the act of sacrificing an animal and shedding its blood brought about eternal forgiveness from sin, then there would be no need for Jesus Christ. Yet Christ came and shed his blood, offering his life for the remission of sin. Thus we find man left to drown in a sea of sin with no hope of finding forgiveness from any other source, save Christ alone. And there in the symbols of the sacrifices performed by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, we find the footprints of Jesus; footprints that lead to Calvary.

“¹ The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died, ² and the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat" (Lev. 16:1-2). ESV

Just before God reveals his plan for yearly atonement, he offers a solemn warning directed towards Aaron and all men who would perform the duties of

High Priest. “Do not come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil; so that you may not die.”

Here is God calling upon Aaron to relive in his mind the terrible events that transpired on the fateful morning when the priestly ministry began. The day that two of Aaron’s newly ordained sons took it upon themselves to approach God on their own time and in their own way. That act of reckless abandon bought about their untimely death when fire literally fell from Heaven and devoured them.

To reveal just how important the Day of Atonement was in God’s eyes, God tells Moses to bring Aaron into remembrance of that day. “Remind Aaron what happened when Nadab and Abihu thought themselves to be something when they were nothing.” That God would cause Aaron to relive the day he lost two of his own sons is no small thing in matters of forgiveness from sin. The very wording of the scripture leads one to believe that every year as the sun dawned on the Day of Atonement, Aaron would get out of bed and speak the names of Nadab and Abihu; thereby placing himself into a proper mindset for going about the task at hand. God would have Aaron recall the unworthiness of man, in order that he could truly understand the mercy of God.

“3 But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. 5 And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering” (Lev. 16:3-5). ESV

Now that God has placed Aaron in the proper mindset, he then tells Aaron how to approach him. Aaron is to bring a young bull as a sin offering, and a ram for a

burnt offering. He was to then remove his elaborate priestly garments, bathe his entire body, and clothe himself in white linen. The Bible emphatically states, “These are the holy garments!” White linen garments that stood as a representation of holiness. The change of clothes did not go unnoticed as, “On this one day in the year, when he [Aaron] did the holiest thing of all, he was to wear the vestments of any ordinary priest.”³⁵ Paul House comments that, “before God on this special day the High Priest stands as a sinner ministering to sinners, stripped of pride and privilege.”³⁶ Aaron was to remove the garments that distinguished him and his office, taking on instead the garments of a humbler, meeker estate. Truly the work performed by Aaron on this day must be done in purity and holiness.

“6 Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. 7 Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. 9 And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering, 10 but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel” (Lev 16:6-10). ESV

Verse 6 informs us that the bull was to become a sin offering for Aaron and his house. Before Aaron could begin presenting sacrifices on behalf of Israel, he first had to present a sacrifice for himself. Following the sin offering, Aaron then presented two goats of equal size and weight at the door of the Tabernacle. One was to become a sacrifice, and one was left to bear the sins of the nation.

³⁵ George Angus Fulton Knight, Leviticus, Daily Bible Study (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 89.

³⁶ Paul R. House, Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p 138.

The Hebrew word for scapegoat, *LaAzazel*, appears only one time in this text, and that is in verse 8. In a literal sense, the word scapegoat means to remove or to separate. The goat, on which the lot for LaAzazel fell, was to be removed or separated from the community and nation of Israel. Dr. David L.

Cooper comments:

Let us note the fact that the high priest laid his hands upon the head of the live goat and confessed over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions, even all their sins, in order that “the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land.” The language is very explicit — *all* the iniquities, *all* the transgressions. There is no need of our taking this language except at its face value. Thus there was included in these expressions both the known and the unknown sins of the entire nation that afflicted their souls. Those who did not in genuine repentance and in humiliation for their sins afflict their souls did not enjoy the forgiveness of their sins, but were to be cut off from the commonwealth of Israel.³⁷

LaAzazel would then be led out into the barren wilderness and slowly backed off the edge of a cliff, forcing the goat to its death; signifying the removal of sin for the nation.

Following the offering of LaAzazel, Aaron would take a censer full of coals from off the altar and enter the Holy of Holies. There he would pour the coals from the altar onto the floor making sure to add the sweet incense causing a fragrant smoke to fill the Holy Place. The blood of the sin offering would then be sprinkled seven times facing eastward upon the Mercy Seat. Following the sprinkling of the blood, Aaron would turn and retrieve the bowl containing the blood of the goat slain on behalf of Israel. Walking back into the Most Holy Place, Aaron pours out the remaining blood around the base of the altar of burnt

³⁷ David L. Cooper, [The Ritualism of the Great Day of Atonement — Yom Kippur](http://www.ariel.org/dlc/dlc-sma-17.htm)
<http://www.ariel.org/dlc/dlc-sma-17.htm> (accessed January 11, 2014).

offering, signifying to the Israelites that the Tabernacle once stained with the sins of a nation had now been cleansed.

The timing of the Day of Atonement was the tenth day of the seventh month, which would correspond to our mid-September and October. This also placed the Day of Atonement five days before the Feast of Tabernacles, a week during which the Israelites were to live in wooden booths and place themselves in remembrance of their life in Egypt. The chapter ends by saying "And he [Aaron] did as the Lord commanded Moses." Everything that God required be accomplished to bring about a yearly atonement for Israel, Aaron obeyed. That sentence says more than the casual observer understands. Had Aaron failed to obey God's command, or fail to follow the process God demanded, not only would he have died, but Israel would have remained in sin.

There is perhaps no greater example where God's heart is revealed for all mankind, than in the Day of Atonement. The rituals and sacrifices followed and offered on that day reveal types and shadows of our great High Priest Jesus Christ. Here too, we discover a God ordained worldview that is not limited by time or space. Mary Fairchild writes:

The Tabernacle and the Temple gave a clear picture of how sin separates us from the holiness of God. In Bible times, only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies by passing through the heavy veil that hung from ceiling to floor, creating a barrier between the people and the presence of God. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter and offer a blood sacrifice to cover the sins of the people. However, at the very moment when Jesus died on the cross, Matthew 27:51 says, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quake, and the rocks were split." (NKJV) Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 beautifully explain how Jesus Christ became our High Priest and entered heaven (the Holy of Holies), once and for all, not by the blood of sacrificial animals, but by his

own precious blood on the cross. Christ himself was the atoning sacrifice for our sins; thus, he obtained for us eternal redemption! As believers we accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Yom Kippur, the final atonement for sin.³⁸

Aaron the High Priest would awake on the Day of Atonement and prepare to offer sacrifice for the nation of Israel. Now multiply that by billions of individuals whose lives span thousands of years, and we still cannot imagine what Calvary must have been like for Jesus Christ! What thoughts must have been running through the mind of Jesus as he rose on crucifixion day; knowing that before the night fell, his body would be in a tomb and he would bear the sins of the world?

Some aspects of Christ's atoning death were thereby prefigured. Christ died for sins of deepest dye, and he died not for an individual, or for a few persons, not even for a nation. He died for the sins of the world. The whole rites of this day were typical of the atoning work of our Great High Priest. He "offered himself without spot to God." Spiritual and eternal blessings, however, could only be obtained through the medium of a greater high priest and a greater sin offering. His blood – His alone – can sanctify and bring sinners near to the Holy One of Israel.³⁹

In Aaron's removal of his priestly garments, we see Jesus Christ empty himself of all his Heavenly glory, take on a form that he had never known, and allow himself to be made a little lower than the angels, in order that mankind might be set free from sin. Jesus Christ all God, yet all man. He as a true High Priest entered once into the Holy Place not made with hands, and with his own blood obtained eternal redemption for all mankind.

³⁸ Mary Fairchild, Day Of Atonement
<http://christianity.about.com/od/biblefeastsandholidays/p/dayofatonement.htm> (accessed January 11, 2014).

³⁹ William Brown, The Tabernacle Its Priests And Its Services (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), p. 140-142.

One wonders how all the events could be crowded into one single day. And then after a year the ritual had to be done all over again. But when Christ the Greater High Priest came by a better and more perfect sacrifice, He needed not first make atonement for His own sin; all this could be eliminated. The work is done, and God Himself can do no more than that which was done by the Lord Jesus on the Cross.⁴⁰

Jesus Christ accomplished more good on the cross with one drop of blood, than the blood of every bull, lamb and goat could ever begin to accomplish. Glory to God!

Blood

“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” (Lev 17:11). ESV

It only seems appropriate that a chapter given solely to the subject of blood would fall on the heels of a chapter dedicated to atonement. Atonement found through the sacrifice of animals and the sprinkling of their blood before the Mercy Seat of God. Once atonement had been made, the Israelite would need assistance in maintaining that peace. Therefore, it would only make sense that following the instructions given for the Day of Atonement, God would then include practical laws to live by. It is God’s earnest desire that those whom he forgives be willing to give their lives in service for him.

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 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. 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” (Lev 17:1-4). ESV

⁴⁰ M. R. DeHaan, The Tabernacle (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), p. 1183-184.

God's instructions are to *"Aaron, his sons, and all the people of Israel."* These laws will be laws to live by, and God wants the priesthood to understand them as well as the common everyday man and woman. Holiness as a lifestyle is not for clergy alone! God expects every man and woman who calls upon his name to live a life that is pleasing to him, and sets them apart from the world.

In these verses we find that anyone who kills an ox, lamb or goat, whether inside or outside the camp, and does not present it at the door of the Tabernacle, is to be excommunicated from Israel. This is a serious offense carrying a serious penalty! But why such drastic measures for what would appear to be so little an offense? Verse 7 tells us why:

"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" (Lev 17:7). ESV

The fact that Israel had not yet begun to move towards the Promised Land presupposes that they were already guilty of the offense mentioned. Where else could they have adopted such a heinous crime, than by living as slaves in Egypt? Before Israel even began to move, God wanted the idolatry to stop!

This speaks volumes to the personal and sociological issues many face today in the 21st century. How many times do we hear of someone offer their life to Christ, yet still want to retain some sinful habit learned in sin? Because we live in a world that caters to sinful desires, many try using excuses like, "Well the Bible doesn't say I can't," or "But I've seen other Christians do it." Instead of reading the Bible and taking the time to learn just how vile sin is in the eyes of God, we look around us at a world full of people doing whatever they want in the

name of religion, and follow their lead. Meanwhile, God is telling Moses that *anyone* who kills an animal for sacrifice and fails to bring it to the door of the Tabernacle was to be “cut off from among his people.”

The phrase in verse 4 that says, “bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man,” means that the man or woman who refused to properly present their animal at the door of the Tabernacle, were to be looked upon as if they had shed the blood of a fellow human being. Adam Clarke notes:

Having poured out the blood improperly, he shall be considered as guilty of murder, because that blood, had it been properly and sacrificially employed, might have made atonement for the life of a man.⁴¹

Look at how serious God took the shedding of an animal’s blood to bring about forgiveness from sin. Improperly shedding the blood of an animal was no small matter in God’s eyes. In fact, this meant so much to God, that the inappropriate shedding of an animal’s blood cost that individual the right to live with their family as well as the right to be considered an Israelite.

Just how serious a matter is it to us that Jesus Christ willingly shed his own blood for the remission of sin? We say that we want to live for Christ with our lips, but in our heart we want to hold onto those sins we learned while living in Egypt!

In verse 7, the word translated demons is the Hebrew word *Seirim*. *Seirim* means goat or field-devil. The Egyptians worshiped satyrs like Pan, a false god who was in the form of a goat. Worshippers of Pan offered their sacrifices in tasteless and deplorable ways, teaching us that God did not place these

⁴¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

restrictions on Israel simply because he had nothing better to do, but because of whom the sacrifice was intended for.

“5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did” (1 Cor 10:5-6). ESV

God does not lay heavy restrictions on man just because it brings him pleasure; God offers us laws and examples to live by so that we can better serve him.

“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” (Lev 17:11). ESV

In verse 11, God gets to the heart of the matter. It should be noted in verse 11, that it was God who granted man the opportunity to use the blood of an animal for the atonement of a soul. Not that the animal was a worthy substitute, but that God was willing to look upon the shed blood of that animal as taking the place of man. Life is retained through the blood! When the throat of a bull was cut to begin the sacrificial process and the blood of that animal began to flow, it was then that the bull began to lose its life. As the blood flowed from its neck to the ground, the priest would take a bowl and catch some of the blood, turn around, and offer that blood upon the altar to God. God would then look upon the blood of that bull as being an acceptable substitute for the one who brought the sacrifice. What a mighty God we serve; a God who willingly accepted a lesser sacrifice, in order that he might enjoy communion with man.

“11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Rev 12:11). ESV

Andrew Murray states that, “all these sacrifices and offerings were only types and shadows, till the Lord Jesus came. His blood was the reality to which these types pointed. His blood was in itself of infinite value, because it carried His soul or life.”⁴² Murray continues:

To purchase, to ransom, means always that one valuable thing is given for another. Our souls needed redemption: the law demanded the payment of a ransom. We were under its power and condemnation. We were held as prisoners until what we owed was paid, a recompense for the wrongs we had done – a perfect righteousness. Jesus came and gave Himself in our place. He bore our punishment of death, our curse of death. He shed His blood as reconciliation for our sin. He gave His life for our life. Jesus has bought us by His blood.⁴³

The only way an individual can enter into a proper relationship with God, is to find forgiveness and atonement through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

⁴² Andrew Murray, The Power Of The Blood Of Jesus (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1993), p. 28.

⁴³ Andrew Murray, The Blood Of The Cross (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 105.

Chapter Seven

Laws Concerning Sexual And Moral Purity

“¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord your God. ³ You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴ You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. ⁵ You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord” (Lev 18:1-5). ESV

Beginning in chapter 18 and continuing through chapter 20, God presents laws meant to show the sacredness of marriage, purity, and holiness within the lives of his people. From the beginning of time, it was God’s intention that a man and a woman unite together as one and populate the earth:

“²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). ESV

Notice the wording used in this verse, “they *shall become* one flesh.” Meaning that in the eyes of God, a man and woman cannot be considered *one flesh*, until they are properly united. Living together and sharing the same bed with someone who is not a legal husband or wife, is the Biblical equivalent to fornication. By definition, fornication means, to engage in sex outside the bonds of marriage. The Hebrew word for *joined* (or “hold fast”) in Genesis 2:24, means to cling, to cleave, or to catch; in essence, to be glued to. Cleaving to someone, or being glued to someone, is a far cry from what society teaches in the 21st century. Society assures us that there is nothing wrong in moving from bedroom to bedroom, in search of the right man or woman, doing whatever you want with whomever you want, as often as it feels good. How sad it is to realize just how

little mankind has changed over the years. The very fact that God found it necessary to include these moral and sexual laws, leads us to believe that this type of lifestyle had already begun revealing itself within the nation of Israel as a whole.

Within the first five verses of Leviticus 18, we find God warning Israel not to allow themselves to be swept away by the lifestyles of the Egyptians where they came from, or the Canaanites to which they were going. How many times in previous chapters already covered, have we read where God expected his people to live differently than anyone else around them? “Don’t be like the Egyptians, and don’t be like the Canaanites, rather live according to my judgments and statutes.” For as ludicrous as it may sound in the 21st century, God really does expect his children to live holy lives in front of their family members and friends.

Once God reminds the Israelites who they are and who it is they serve, starting in verses 6-18, beings listing by name what could only be described as inappropriate sex:

“6 None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the Lord” (Lev 18:6). ESV

The phrase “*uncover nakedness*” is merely another way of saying sexual intercourse. Basically, anything other than sex between a husband and his wife (or a wife and her husband), is immoral, and should be viewed as such.

Since God invented sex and ordained marriage, He has every right to establish the regulations that control them, and our obedience will help protect these wonderful blessings from the defilements of the world. The laissez faire attitude of the humanistic world that says "anything goes" is not for the Christian. When it comes to moral standards, we're becoming

more and more of a persecuted remnant, but we dare not retreat. The repeated phrase "uncover the nakedness" simply means "to have sexual relations with." These laws would apply not only to marriage but also to casual contacts that were immoral.⁴⁴

God is ensuring that there were no loopholes for the Israelites to try and leap through concerning sexual intercourse; so he goes into great detail naming those individuals who were *off limits* when it came to having sex:

Intercourse is forbidden (1) with a mother, (2) with a step-mother, (3) with a sister or half-sister, (4) with a granddaughter, the daughter of either son or daughter, (5) with the daughter of a step-mother, (6) with an aunt, the sister of either father or mother, (7) with the wife of an uncle on the father's side, (8) with a daughter-in-law, (9) with a sister-in-law, or brother's wife, (10) with a woman and her daughter, or a woman and her granddaughter, and (11) with two sisters at the same time.⁴⁵

Isn't it sad that God had to go into such great detail concerning sexual relations and marriage? Isn't it sad how little America cares today? That so much time was spent on teaching the Israelites who they could and could not be with intimately, points to major lack of self-control. Why do we live in a world that seems to thrive on fornication and adultery? Because we live in a world that wants no part of God!

"19 You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. 20 And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife and so make yourself unclean with her. 21 You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. 22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. 23 And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it; neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion" (Lev. 18:19-23). ESV

⁴⁴ Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament © 2001-2004 by Warren W. Wiersbe. All rights reserved.

⁴⁵ Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

In verse 19, God continues his warnings against impure sex acts, and includes having a relationship with a woman during menstruation. In verse 20, God expressly forbids adultery while verse 21 discusses the act of *offering* a child to Molech or Baal-melech. The Canaanite god Molech, was a hallow bronze statue that had the head of a bull, with arms stretching out to receive the children offered to him. The statue would be heated and parents who wished to sacrifice their children would lay them across Molech's arms thereby roasting their child to death. Today we read about sacrifices to false gods and wonder how any parent could treat their children in this manner; yet, how many parents today are perfectly content to allow their children to believe whatever they want, and practice whatever religion they choose? They may not be physically placing their children onto the arms of a heated statue, but they are preparing them to be held in Satan's arms for eternity!

In Leviticus 18:22, God says all that should ever need to be said on the subject of homosexuality. "You **shall not** lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." By definition, the word abomination means, morally disgusting or deplorable. Once more Leviticus reveals the heart of God for all generations of time. In a chapter warning the Israelites of the dangers in mimicking the actions of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, God specifically states that sexual intercourse between two men or two women is to be viewed as morally disgusting and deplorable! There is more at stake in these verses than an individual's rights and privileges; there are innate spirituals laws put in place by God that were never meant to be broken.

Israel was surrounded with sexual perversion. God warned the Israelites not to live like the Egyptians behind them or the Canaanites before them. Their neighbors had defiled themselves with all kinds of unnatural behavior: incest, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality. Because of this, God had rejected them and expelled them from the land. Leviticus 18 is a warning to the Israelites to guard themselves against sexual sins. Instead of compromise, they must listen to God's Word. So Christians are marked by their relationship with God. Compromise and conformity – living like the Canaanites all around us – is self-destructive. How we deal with our sexuality often reflects how seriously we have submitted every area of our lives to God's control.⁴⁶

When the men of Sodom asked Lot to send out the two men who were in his home, it lies beyond all doubt that they wanted to have homosexual relations with them! If there was nothing wrong with that, then why didn't Lot send them out? He was willing to send out his virgin daughters, why not the two men instead? Because it is not **natural** for two men to have an intimate relationship!

A man desiring a man, or a woman desiring another woman, goes against God's order of creation. What the men of Sodom were asking for was not natural. Even Lot was smart enough to figure it out. He may not have been too bright when it came to making some rather important decisions like where to raise his family and when to stop drinking, but when it came to abnormal relationships, he knew it was wrong.

Just for the sake of understanding, the word *Sodom* means fire or burning. It has become a euphemism for sexual relations between two individuals of the same sex. That is also where we get the word *Sodomy*, which defined means, abnormal sexual intercourse, as between persons of the same sex.

⁴⁶ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, Encountering The Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1999), p. 123.

God looked upon the men of Sodom as being wicked and perverted individuals; and because of that, he personally destroyed them with fire. What needs to stand out to us concerning the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah is the fact that this event took place some 650-700 years **before** God gave Moses the Levitical Law. Sodomy had become such an issue that God felt it important enough to include laws condemning it.

God did not want his people involved in homosexual relationships under the Old Law, and nothing mankind does today can change that. No matter how many laws this country passes granting approval for homosexual marriage, God has not changed! He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

“*17* None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, and none of the sons of Israel shall be a cult prostitute. *18* You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God” (Deut 23:17-18). ESV

The book of Deuteronomy was written just before the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land. They had just completed their 40 year trek through the wilderness, and were now poised to enter Canaan. However, right before they began their final journey, Moses sits everyone down and begins to remind them of the various parts of the law. Part of his lesson is contained in Deuteronomy 23:17-18. In Canaan where the Israelites were going, the Canaanites were involved in all sorts of false worship. So if you were a Canaanite, and you wanted to worship your god, you would make your way to the temple. There at the temple would be both male and female prostitutes. Money would be exchanged and worship of the false god with a temple prostitute would begin. It

was left up to the individual to determine if they wanted a male or a female to worship their false god with. It is this very act of debauchery that Moses is doing his best to condemn! “Here’s what they do in Canaan. Whatever you do, don’t become involved in it.” In verse 18, the phrase “*wages of a dog*” is a direct reference to sexual relations between two men:

"The price of a dog" is not the price paid for the sale of a dog, but is a figurative expression used to denote the gains of [sexual intercourse] by the Greeks, and received its name from the dog-like manner in which the male debased himself.⁴⁷

The Bible likens two men engaged in an act of Sodomy as being like a dog!

Unfortunately, what happens a lot of times, is that people will use the argument “well that’s the Old Testament show it to me in the New.” So we turn to Romans 1 where we find Paul (like Moses) listing for the Christians in Rome the differences between good behavior and bad behavior:

“26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error” (Rom 1:26-27). ESV

The Bible says that a woman with a woman and a man with a man is just not natural! Homosexual behavior isn’t natural because it goes against God’s original creation at the beginning of time. When God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the “breath of life,” he set innate, inbred and spiritual principles into motion that were never intended to be broken.

⁴⁷ Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

“9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11). ESV

Paul now gets down to the crux of the matter. Questions like, “but how do I know they weren’t born that way?” or “who am I to say they shouldn’t have happiness in their life as well?” are all addressed in Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians.

“The *unrighteous will not* inherit the kingdom of God.” What sins were listed as being something that would not permit an unrighteous person to enter the kingdom? Homosexuality and Sodomy! The Bible speaks for itself. But we cannot allow ourselves to miss out on the message contained in verse 11; “such **were** some of you.” The word “*were*” is past tense. Meaning that at some point in their past, many of the Corinthian saints practiced the sins listed in those verses. Only now they had, “been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Paul is saying that homosexuality as a practiced lifestyle is not only sin, but it is also a lifestyle that will ultimately send a person’s soul to hell. How should Christians handle the matter? We hate the sin but we love the sinner! We don’t berate them or belittle them or bash them over the head with God’s Word. We love them just as Christ does and found them worthy enough of giving his life for.

“24 Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, 25 and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants” (Lev 18:24-25). ESV

In his closing comments concerning holiness in marriage, God once again implores the Israelites not to defile themselves with any of the things discussed in this chapter. He goes as far to say that the land was defiled and vomited out its inhabitants. In essence, the Canaanites had become so perverted in their religious and sexual practices, that the very land itself was said to be sick of them. It was for that very reason that God was allowing the land of Canaan to go to the children of Israel.

It sounds so simple. Follow God's plan and stay out of trouble. Yet, what would appear to be very simplistic has somehow been made to seem almost unbearable. Marriage is sacred in God's eyes. In fact, he compared the bond of marriage to the union between himself and the church his bride. If each one of us would just pause and consider how much it cost God to buy us out of sin, we wouldn't be so quick to allow ourselves to get caught up in the ways of the world.

There are times in our life and in our walk with God that it becomes necessary to pause and look behind us, if for no other reason than to remind ourselves where we came from and where we are going. Not only is God leading Israel towards the culmination of entering the land of Promise, but he's also guiding them on a spiritual journey towards holiness. The modern day saint finds themselves on that same journey as well. The ultimate goal is Heaven; but along the road of life, God would have us exemplify lives of purity and holiness.

"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" (Lev 19:1-2). ESV

Two things should immediately stand out to us in these verses. God's law is given for the **entire** nation of Israel. No one group or class is exempt. No one in Israel could listen to these laws being read and say, "Well, that's not for me." Every law that God is about to impart (and has imparted already), was intended for every man and woman in Israel. The second aspect of these verses that should stand out to us is that fact that God comes right out and very plainly says, "You *shall be holy*, for I the Lord your God am holy." Here is God commanding his chosen people to live holy lifestyles. God did not leave it up to the Israelites as to whether or not they felt like being holy! Holiness was to be the key that separated the Israelites from the Canaanites and the Egyptians, and holiness is to be the key that separates Christians from the world.

"¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 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" (1 Peter 1:14-16). ESV

We find then, that God is basing the remainder of the laws he is about to impart on the fact that since God is holy, his people will want to be holy as well.

At this point, God begins to describe the type of life that his people should strive for in their everyday lives. He mentions having reverence for parents and respect for Sabbaths, to leaving some of the harvest for the poor and less fortunate. He admonishes them not to steal, to deal falsely, to lie, cheat or rob. Then, he addresses a subject that has remained a topic of discussion ever since God spoke the words:

“17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord” (Lev 19:17-18). ESV

In verse 17, God tells Israel not to retain hatred in their heart for a fellow brother. God is literally saying that the best way to avoid having hatred build up inside a heart was to confront the person they have an issue with face to face. “Don’t allow hatred to fester in your heart.” When we allow ourselves to ‘hold on’ to something and refuse to let go, God is telling us that if left unchecked, it can get to the point where we become guilty of sin! As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny” (Matt 5:23-26). ESV

Then in verse 18, God calls on Israel to live a life of love not a life of vengeance or revenge. Vengeance belongs to God, it is not our responsibility to hold grudges or look for opportunities to ‘get back’ at someone for something they did to injure us. In fact, this topic meant so much to Jesus that he quoted Leviticus 19:18 on two separate occasions in the New Testament. Once when teaching his disciples during the Sermon on the Mount, and once when being tempted by a Pharisaical lawyer:

“43 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’ (Matt 5:43). ESV

“39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39). ESV

John J. Parsons points out what should be the most obvious lesson contained within this command:

The word here is to you – the second person singular. You personally are to hear this commandment to love. You are the subject of this verse.⁴⁸

When God commanded Israel to love their neighbor as they would love themselves, he was placing the burden of responsibility squarely on the Israelites' shoulders. That fact has not changed today. We, as born again Disciples of Christ, are to love others as Christ first loved us and died for our sins! Far too often, the decision to love someone is based upon how that individual treats me. What we fail to understand by living that way, is that Christ loved us even though we are/were unlovable; to the point that he was willing to ask his Father to forgive the very soldier who nailed him to the Cross.

Nowhere did the Law teach hatred for one's enemies. Jesus defined our enemies as those who curse us, hate us, and exploit us selfishly. Since Christian love is an act of the will, and not simply an emotion, He has the right to command us to love our enemies. After all, He loved us when we were His enemies (Rom 5:10). We may show this love by blessing those who curse us, doing well to them, and praying for them. When we pray for our enemies, we find it easier to love them. It takes the "poison" out of our attitudes.⁴⁹

There is an old saying that goes, “Like father like son.” Jesus Christ entered this world through the miracle of Virgin Birth, talked like us, walked like us, even ate

⁴⁸ John J. Parsons, [You Shall Love](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Meditations/Neighbor_Love/neighbor_love.html) http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Meditations/Neighbor_Love/neighbor_love.html (accessed January 14, 2014).

⁴⁹ Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

and drank like us; yet for as much 'like us' as he was, his sole purpose and mission in this life was to reveal Father's love for all mankind, and bring about full and complete forgiveness from sin. Pure love cannot be relegated to one era of time or one particular group of people.

“34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 22:34-40). ESV

Taken within context, Christ is describing the length and depth of the Mosaic Law. The entire Decalogue revolves around true genuine love for God and fellow man:

This question was being debated among the religious leaders at the time and various commandments were being championed as the greatest. Jesus' quick reply summarized the entire Decalogue. He replied that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord... God with all one's heart... soul, and... mind (cf. Deut 6:5). He added that the second commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself (cf. Lev 19:18). The first summarizes the first table of the Law, and the second summarizes the second table. Jesus said, All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments, that is, all the Old Testament develops and amplifies these two points: love for God and love for others, who are made in God's image.⁵⁰

True holiness begins with love as demonstrated by Jesus Christ who offered up his life for his friends. Graeme Goldsworthy connects the Old with New by summarizing the importance of these moral laws:

⁵⁰ Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries; Bible Knowledge Commentary/New Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries. All rights reserved.

These laws, then, were an aspect of God's teaching to his people of the absolute opposition of uncleanness and profanity to holiness. It is a helpful antidote to the popular notion that the meaning of the word "holy" is self-evident. It is in fact a very elusive term, but it is finally defined for us by Christ himself. In the Old Testament it is drawn out in different ways that show the utter separateness of God and his people from a profane world. Its ultimate expression is, negatively, God's rejection of sin as seen on Calvary and, positively, in the vision of God we find Jesus.⁵¹

Something else of extreme importance that we find mentioned within God's moral laws to the Israelites is the subject of witchcraft:

"31 Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev 19:31). ESV

"6 If a person turns to mediums and wizards, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. 7 Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. 8 Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you" (Lev 20:6-8). ESV

"27 A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev 20:27). ESV

Here we find God imploring the Israelites to stay away from mediums and those who have familiar spirits. More and more children and young adults are becoming involved in the supernatural. Hollywood and television market satanic behavior under the guise of popular culture, making it appear as if only the successful teens are those with hidden powers, who possess the ability to cast spells. But is witchcraft harmless fun? Even though it is portrayed as harmless and fun, does that make it so? A recent study revealed that there are upwards of 400,000 adherents to Wicca and witchcraft, surpassing Hinduism and Buddhism, with the majority of those adherents being young teens and young adults. This is

⁵¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching The Whole Bible As Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), p. 10.

what happens when parents allow Hollywood to dictate the standards in their own home! “Oh, but there’s nothing wrong with it, it’s just good clean fun.” But in a country where left-wing liberals are doing their best to undermine the family by changing the definition of marriage, what is the definition of good clean fun?

In a country where elementary school children who want to say the Pledge of Allegiance are forced to leave the classroom and meet in the gymnasium, what is the definition of good clean fun? How many Christians placate and defend Harry Potter while book sales, Internet sales and movie sales teach America’s children how to cast spells all in the name of fun?

The Bible offers some very stern warnings against witchcraft while the church of the 21st century adopts a ‘laze a fair’ attitude toward something that can be traced back to the Devil himself. Why would God include such warnings to the Israelites, if witchcraft and sorcery were not a matter of great concern to him? We must continue to bear in mind that God is addressing issues that the Egyptians and the Canaanites were involved in; issues that God did not want his children to emulate. “When you get to where I’m sending you, don’t be like the people who live there. You be different.”

When Saul refused to obey God and completely wipe out the Amakekites, Samuel responded in a rather strong way:

“23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king” (1 Sam 15:23). ESV

Samuel likens rebellion against God as being equivalent to the sin of divination or witchcraft. Because of that disobedience, Saul was rejected as being king!

Another king who refused to obey God was Hezekiah's son Manasseh:

"3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asherahs, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. 6 And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger" (2 Chron 33:3-6). ESV

If witchcraft is just good clean fun, then why was God so angry with Manasseh?

In the mind of God, witchcraft is not cute, it's not harmless, and it's not fun;

because behind the cute little spells and incantations lies a force far greater and more powerful than anyone on our own will ever be. A demonic force that will damn the eternal soul to an everlasting lake of fire:

"19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19-21). ESV

Leviticus 20 compares spiritual prostitution with mediums and familiar spirits.

God is a holy jealous God who inhabits the praise of his people. When his people condone an act or a force that goes against everything he stands for, they are in essence taking a stand against God.

The Bible provides examples showing the folly and failures of those who claimed the ability to predict the future based on their own powers or those of spirits. God calls the word of diviners "nonsense," "lies" and "deception" for foolish people. God said, "Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!" If an Israelite lived the deceitful practice of being a medium, it was punishable by death. The presence of a medium or spiritist among God's people of Israel was considered

defilement. All these practices take people further from their Creator, the true and living God.⁵²

In the book of Leviticus, God presents a 'moral code' concerning homosexuality and witchcraft that includes all ages and all nations of people who live upon the face of the earth. Christ died to redeem fallen man; man accepts Christ's free gift and begins to move closer and closer in their relationship with God. Suddenly, he discovers that he no longer looks like the world or acts like the world, in fact, he no longer has any inward desire to be in the world; so he begins striving for the prize of Heaven and eternal life to come. Herein we see man 'set apart' to God, in order that God may by all means use him to bring someone else to the knowledge of forgiveness full and free. God longs for a holy people no matter the time or age.

⁵² Paul S. Taylor, The Occult – What Does The Bible Say About It? <http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-occult.html> (accessed January 15, 2014).

Conclusion

When approached in a Godly earnest fashion, the book of Leviticus promises a rewarding and fulfilling spiritual journey. No other book in the Old Testament presents such beautiful types and shadows of Jesus Christ. Though it may seem tired and outdated, the truth contained within the confines of this sacred word, will far outlast modern man's attempts to justify Christianity apart from Christ. Just as the Israelite of old, could not find God's blessings upon their life apart from God's law, so too, modern man today can never truly understand the heart of God apart from learning and applying his word to their life.

Within the pages of this dissertation, I have attempted to answer the following questions:

- Does Leviticus contain a God ordained worldview, or is it to be seen as nothing more than outdated legalism?
- Did Christ reference Leviticus and its function within the history of Israel? If so, how did he address it and to what extent?
- Does Leviticus reveal the heart of God for all mankind, or is it limited to one particular nation or age?
- Does an in-depth study on Leviticus disclose types and shadows of Jesus Christ as God's ultimate sacrifice for sin?
- Can Leviticus speak to the twenty-first century and address such sociological issues as homosexuality and witchcraft?

It is my earnest and sincere prayer that the reader will gain a better understanding of God and his unconditional love for man. That is the true message of Leviticus; God's unfailing love! Therefore, it must be stated that should any good come from this work, it will be done only because of HE who

moved Leviticus out of the scrolls of man, and into the hearts and lives of the redeemed. Matthew Henry summarizes my thoughts very well:

1. That we are not under the dark shadows of the law, but enjoy the clear light of the gospel, which shows us Christ the end of the law for righteousness, Rom 10:4. The doctrine of our reconciliation to God by a Mediator is not clouded with the smoke of burning sacrifices, but cleared by the knowledge of Christ and him crucified.
2. That we are not under the heavy yoke of the law, and the carnal ordinances of it (as the apostle calls them, Heb 9:10), imposed till the time of reformation, a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear (Acts 15:10), but under the sweet and easy institutions of the gospel, which pronounces those the true worshippers that worship the Father in spirit and truth, by Christ only, and in his name, who is our priest, temple, altar, sacrifice, purification, and all. Let us not therefore think that because we are not tied to the ceremonial cleansings, feasts, and oblations, a little care, time, and expense, will serve to honor⁵³ God with. No, but rather have our hearts more enlarge with free-will offerings to his praise, more inflamed with holy love and joy, and more engaged in seriousness of thought and sincerity of intention. Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, and full assurance of faith, worshipping God with so much the more cheerfulness and humble confidence, still saying, blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

⁵³ Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database
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