

Leviticus: *Priest's Handbook*

You shall be holy for I am holy.

Leviticus comes from the Greek title of the third book in the Old Testament, meaning "relating to the Levites." It is named after the tribe of Levi. Actually it is more concerned with the priests than with the Levites themselves. The Hebrew title, *Wayyiqra*, is from the first word in the book meaning "And He called."

AUTHOR: is Moses who is spoken of fifty-six times as receiving these words from the Lord. He either wrote them down himself or dictated them (cf. 1:1; 4:1; 6:1, 24; 8:1; 11:1; 12:1, etc.). Jesus Christ attested to Moses' authorship in Mk. 1:44; cf. Lev. 13:49).

RECIPIENTS: the nation of Israel (1:2).

DATE: sometime before the wilderness wanderings probably c. 1444 B.C. It is one month after pitching the tent in the Sinai (Ex. 40:17) and the departure from Sinai (Num. 1:1; 10:11).

THEME: God is holy and His people must approach Him in holiness (11:45).

PURPOSE: The Talmud calls Leviticus the "Law of the Priests." It explains how sinful man can approach a holy God through His divine provision of a perfect sacrifice (Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:26; Jn. 1:29).

KEY: 11:45 or 19:2; Heb. 9:22; John 1:29

PLACE: The events in Leviticus take place at Mt. Sinai (7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34).

SACRIFICES: were to impress upon Israel man's sinfulness, and to picture the coming of the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Leviticus is God's picture book and every picture points to the work of Christ. The word "sacrifice" occurs over forty times. "Priest" is found 190 times. "Blood" is found eighty-six times, "holy" about eighty-seven times (about 152 times in adjective, noun, and verbal forms), and "atonement" forty-five times. Obviously this is the book about sacrifices.

The great lesson from Leviticus is the Holy God must have a holy people and this holiness must embrace the whole life of man. Why the need for animal sacrifices? Man is a sinner. Every sacrifice in the Jewish sacrificial system anticipated the true and perfect sacrifice which Christ would offer when He came. They were shadows of the coming perfect sacrifice for sin. Christ is the end of all the sacrifices. These sacrifices were a witness to the people that they were sinners and could be saved only by substitutionary death offered on their behalf. It testified that they lived only by virtue of the slain victim in their stead. Continual repetition of the sacrifice testified that blood of animals could never take away sin. It was a promise, a prophesy and a pledge. The only cure for sin is the death of Christ. These Old Testament sacrifices were worthless in themselves, but were accepted for the time as a token of the future sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Heb. 10:10-14). Once that sacrifice was offered, all other sacrifices lost their meaning, for the infinite value of the Savior's death was enough to pay the penalty for the sin of all men for all times (Heb. 10:18).

TYPES IN OLD TESTAMENT

John R. Sampey wrote, "A type may properly be defined as a person, institution, or event in the old dispensation which was designed to prefigure a corresponding person, institution, or event in the New." None of the institutions and ceremonies in the Old Covenant were able to save. They were devised as types of Christ and the different phases of effectual salvation as demonstrated in the book of Hebrews (chaps. 7-10). Hebrews is the best commentary on Leviticus. Indeed, the New Testament refers to Leviticus ninety times. The priests and sacrifices were intended to point the way to the "Lamb of God" who in the fullness of time offered the only sufficient sacrifice for sin.

Everything under the Old Covenant typified what God would do in the person of Jesus Christ. The land was a type of the salvation to come through Christ. The covenant people were a type of the New Testament people of faith. The Offerings, Feasts, and Ceremonies all typified redemption through the messiah and the life of the redeemed. The Tabernacle typified the places and the manner in which JHVH met with his people and dealt with their sins. It was a type of the Incarnate Christ and His ministry for men. The priesthood typified the place and manner in which JHVH met with His people and dealt with their sins.

PRINCIPAL TYPES IN LEVITICUS

Burnt Offering (1:1-17) is the consecration of the entire offering to God. Christ offered Himself without spot typifying perfect *surrender* (Matt. 26:39-44; Mk. 14:36; Lk.22:42; Phil. 2:5-11), and the believer (Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 13:15).

Meal or Meat Offering (2:1-16) symbolized thanksgiving and devotion. Christ in His human perfection was tested by suffering typifying *service*. Cf. Sinlessness of Christ (Heb. 4:15; I Jn. 3:5).

Peace Offering (3:1-17) symbolizes peace with God between God and the sinner. Christ is our Peace. He is our *serenity* (Rom. 5:1; Col.1:20).

Sin Offering (4:1-35) is the compulsory offering for the expiation of sin. Christ alone atoned for the guilt of our sin. He is our divine *substitute* (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 13:11-13).

Trespass Offering (5:1-19) cleanses the conscience of specific sins. Christ perfect cleansing for sin. He is our *satisfaction* (Col. 2:13).

Day of Atonement (16:1-34) is the perfect cleansing and restoration by our great High Priest .

Passover (23:4-5) is the celebration of God passing over Israel and judging Egypt. The lamb symbolized the blood of Christ is our Passover who takes away the sins of the world.

Unleavened Bread (23:6-8) symbolizes our communion with Christ.

Firstfruits (23:9-14) represents Christ s resurrection from the dead. He was the first to rise from the dead. When Christ comes a second time the harvest of the whole field will take place.

HOLY DAYS OF ISRAEL

Clyde Francisco suggests the holy days of the of the Hebrews were symbols: the Sabbath of God as Creator, the Passover of God as Redeemer, Pentecost and Tabernacles of God as Provider, and the Day of Atonement of God as holy and gracious.

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Title: Introduction to Leviticus

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