

Leviticus

By James West

Message of the book:

'Be ye holy; for I am holy.'

Background information:

The book was written by Moses around 1445 B.C., one year after Israel departed from Egypt, and covers no more than a span of about two months, according to Hester. There may be a natural progression of events if Leviticus 1:1 follows immediately after Exodus 40:34 (if we assume that the last few verses of Exodus is parenthetical).

Hebrews unfolds much of the symbolism presented in Leviticus, and shows that Christ is typified there. Indeed, it reveals in a mystery the perfect and effectual sacrifice and service of Christ, and prefigures His perfect holiness and purity.

Leviticus details the laws by which the Levites were to carry out their priestly service, and by which the people of Israel were to be governed and judged.

Key words and phrases:

"The Lord called unto Moses and spake unto him" appears in similar form at least 57 times in Leviticus...The key word is "holy" which appears 94 times in 77 verses. The key phrase which appears in similar forms 5 times is, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44).' (*Old Testament Bible History*, p. 59, Hester) It reminds us of God's words to Abraham, '...I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' (Gen 17:1). Especially study 1 Peter 1:13-19, a key cross-reference to the main message of Leviticus.

Outline of the book (adapted from Hester):

1. The sacrifices and offerings; The first three are sweet-savour, the last two are not (1-7)
 - a. Burnt offering: atonement for the sinner (1:4; 2 Cor 5:21)
 - i. Fire symbolizes the wrath of God (Heb 12:29).
 - ii. The fire was to be perpetually burning (6:13).
 - b. Meal offering: consecration
 - i. To be eaten by the priests as their portion (6:16)
 - ii. Flour, oil, frankincense
 - c. Peace offering: peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (**Rom 5:1**)

- i. 'The distinctive feature of the fellowship [peace] offering was its accompanying communal meal.' (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, Leviticus*, comments on 7:11-21; F. Duane Lindsey, edited by Walvoord and Zuck)
 - ii. Involves sacrifice
 - iii. One of these kinds was an offering of thanksgiving (**see Heb 13:15**).
 - d. Sin offering: This seems to pertain to all sins that do not fall into the category of the trespass offering.
 - i. The priest was to eat it, as for the trespass offering (6:26; 7:6-7).
 - e. Trespass offering: Involved restoring what was lost, stolen, or damaged. This seems to pertain to particular sins, namely:
 - i. Not bearing witness in court
 - ii. Becoming ceremonially defiled
 - iii. Vowing, and neglecting to fulfil the vow
 - iv. Misconduct in sacrifices, offerings, or the like
 - v. Irresponsibility in caring for a neighbour's possessions
 - vi. Stealing
 - vii. Pledging an amount of something falsely
- 2. The priesthood (8-10)
 - a. The consecrating of the priesthood (8:23, 24; see also Heb 9:22)
 - b. First atonement made for themselves, and for the people (**9:7; see Heb 7:27**)
 - i. The glory of God was revealed, and His fire consumed the burnt offering. (**9:24**)
 - c. The strange fire of Nadab and Abihu(**10:1-7**)
- 3. Clean and unclean (11-15)
 - a. Beasts (11)
 - b. Purification after childbirth (12)
 - c. Skin plagues, leprosy in garments and houses (13-14)
 - d. Issues or secretions (15)
- 4. Special days and lifestyle (16-27)
 - a. Passover (23:5)
 - i. Fourteenth day of first month
 - ii. Typifies Christ's vicarious death, as the Lamb of God (1 Cor 5:7)
 - b. Feast of unleavened bread (23:6-8; **1 Cor 5:7**)
 - i. Fifteenth day of first month
 - ii. Seven days in duration
 - iii. No leaven taken from Egypt; old ways left behind
 - iv. Most likely included the waving of the first barley sheaf (23:10-11; probably a picture of Christ's resurrection; see 1 Cor 15:20)
 - c. Pentecost; also called the 'feast of harvest' (23:15-21)
 - i. Fifty days after the wave offering of the barley sheaf.
 - ii. Sacrifices and offerings
 - iii. On this day after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, a great harvest of souls were brought into Christ's kingdom (Acts 2:41; John 12:24).
 - d. The Day of Atonement (ch. 16; Heb 9:7, 25, 10:1, 3)

- i. Preceded by the blowing of trumpets (first day of the month; 23:24)
 - ii. Tenth day of the seventh month
 - iii. Bullock and ram for the priest
 - iv. Two goats and ram for the nation
 - v. Present the blood within the veil and at the altar
 - vi. Carcasses burnt outside the camp
- e. Feast of Tabernacles (23:34-43)
 - i. Fifteenth day of seventh month
 - ii. Sacrifices
 - iii. Seven days in duration
 - iv. Dwelling in booths to commemorate the wilderness booths
- f. Sabbatical year (25:1-7)
 - i. Let the land rest the seventh year.
- g. Year of Jubilee
 - i. Every fifty years, on the Day of Atonement
 - ii. Land returned to original owners
 - iii. Slaves to be freed
 - 1. Reminds us that Christ came to set the captives free through His atoning work (**Luke 4:18**)
- 5. Promises and warnings for the nation (ch. 26; **esp. V. 13**)

Concerning the first four points of the above outline, Hester states: 'Now, just place this Jesus above...our "friendly outline" like a magnifying glass above some fine print. Immediately it makes things bigger and plainer!' He then presents the following adaptation (*Old Testament Bible History*, p. 65):

1. Jesus the Perfect Sacrifice for any and all sin
2. Jesus the Perfect High Priest Who ever intercedes for us
3. Jesus the Holy and Pure One in Whom is no sin
4. Jesus our Life in the heavenlies with Whom we are seated. We celebrate every day with joy and live for His glory!

Application:

We see the great solemnity of God's holiness, in that serving Him in any way requires cleansing through Christ's blood, and having respect unto Christ's person. Our God is a consuming fire, and we truly need to remember that it is only by the sacrifice of His own dear Son that we have any right to stand before Him. We ought therefore to be Holy, as Christ is holy. Our Christian life ought to be a sweet mixture of careful reverence, and holy joy, as we realise that the privilege of relationship and service has been purchased by a Holy God.



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