

# The Christian Arsenal

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## LEVITICUS 1:1-7:38

The next three months we will be in the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Numbers. These two books contain a total of 63 chapters, so we know from the outset that we'll be doing only an overview...a survey...**not** a verse by verse study.

The Book of Leviticus is probably the most neglected book in the Old Testament, and certainly in the Bible as a whole!

Many who have set out to read the Bible from cover to cover get "bogged down" in the Book of Leviticus. I mean they see all the **sacrifices** and the **rules** and **rituals** and **regulations** that God gave the Israelites, and they just don't see any **relevance** for them today.

But, I pray that we will see that this is not true. The Book of Leviticus is just as much a part of the inspired Word of God as is the Gospel of John. In fact, I believe the Book of Leviticus is vital to the understanding of the relationship between God and man.

The most glorious truth taught in the Bible is also the most glorious truth taught in the Book of Leviticus and it is this:

### **Man can have a relationship with God! God can be approached by man!!**

But, we need to understand that it is God who has taken the initiative to establish that relationship.

**Man does not seek God. God seeks man.** Leviticus bears that out as well if not better than any other book in God's Word...and we don't have to look very far to see that. The first four words of this book establish that fact:

**"Then the LORD called..."**

And, as we go on in this lesson, we'll see a system of sacrifices set forth. The system of sacrifices wasn't something dreamed up by man in order to reach God....but it was given by God so that man might have fellowship with God.

Did you know that the Book of Leviticus was the first book studied by a Jewish child? Yet, how many of us here today have ever done a study of this book?

As we've already said, we won't be doing an "in depth" study of it now, but we **do** need to become acquainted with it because a book that is mentioned around 40 times in the New Testament should be of great significance to every believer.

Well, wasn't the Book of Leviticus written for the priests and Levites in ancient Israel? Yes, it was! But, its lessons aren't limited to the Jews in ancient Israel.

Paul told Timothy, "**ALL** Scripture was given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

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Paul told the Corinthians that the things written **beforehand** (meaning the Old Testament) were written for our example.

Jesus said we should live by **every** word that God has given us and that includes Leviticus.

Before we look at the sacrifices today, let's set a little background...a little foundation for this book...

The theme of Leviticus is **holiness**. The word "holy" is used 91 times in the Book of Leviticus.

God says in Leviticus, "Be holy as I am holy"...but He didn't just mean for the Jews to be holy. Peter repeats that phrase and applies it to you and me in the book of 1 Peter.

Let's look at five different topics of holiness as pictured in the Book of Leviticus.

## 1) A Holy God

We like to emphasize the fact that God is a God of love, and He is. In fact, the Bible says, "God is love", but love without holiness could be too permissive and could destroy God's perfect law. At the same time, holiness without love would leave no hope for the sinner...There would be no room for John 3:16..."For God so loved the world..."

But, praise God! Both God's love and holiness are perfectly balanced in our holy and loving God!

The Hebrew word for holy that Moses used in Leviticus means "that which is **set apart** and **marked off**, that which is **different**."

The Sabbath was "holy" because God set it apart for His people.

The priests were "holy" because they were set apart to minister to the Lord.

Their garments were "holy" and could not be duplicated for common use.

The tithe was "holy" because it was set apart for God.

The whole sacrificial system that we will see in Leviticus declares to us that man is a sinner. **God is holy and God hates sin**. But, because He loves sinners and wants to forgive them, He provides a substitute to die in the sinner's place.

Folks, our God is holy! No other "deity" or "god" or "idol" is holy. Over and over in Scripture, God is called, "**Holy One of Israel**."

Not only do we see a holy God, but we also see in Leviticus:

## 2) A Holy People

Way back in Genesis, God called out **a people to be set apart**. He called Abraham to be the father of these people. He continued this call on down through the line of Isaac and Jacob.

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God chose these people, He said, not because they were **great or mighty**, but because **He loved them**.

They were not to be like other people. They were to be **different**. They were to be **set apart**. They were to be **holy**. They were to show forth the love of God and His holiness to those around them.

God planted these folks in the land of Canaan, but after a series of events that we won't take the time to go into, they found themselves in bondage down in Egypt. They had become slaves in a pagan land...and they were looked upon and treated as pieces of property, not as human beings.

BUT, they were still God's people. God had initiated a covenant with them through Abraham. This covenant was an unconditional covenant and neither Egypt nor any other power on earth could destroy it or nullify it.

After years of bondage, these people cried out in desperation and back in Exodus 3, God said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people..."

"I have heard their cry..."

"I am aware of their sufferings..."

"I have come down to deliver them..."

And, that's exactly what God did. God used a man named Moses to do this. It was as these folks were in the wilderness of Sinai that God gave Moses

- 1) the Law...including the Ten Commandments
- 2) the instructions for building and furnishing the Tabernacle
- 3) the instructions for the institution of the Levitical priesthood.

In fact, the book of Exodus ends with the Tabernacle being completed and set up and the glory of God coming upon it, and the Book of Leviticus follows with the specific instructions that deal with the

...the **worship** of God's people in the Tabernacle

...the **walk** of God's people in the land.

Today, we the believers in Jesus Christ are to make up God's holy nation.

And, He chose us for the same reason He chose the Jews. He chose us not because of any worth in us, but because He loves us!! One of the seminary wives sang a song at Founders' Days a couple of weeks ago. Within the song is contained the little children's song, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know." The song goes on to say,

"This I know, this I know,  
Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.

The tune was written for the children,  
But the words won't let me go...  
The unending love of Jesus...this I know."

Praise God for the love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!!

Just as God's plan was for the Jewish nation to show forth His holiness to the pagan nations around them, we are to show forth God's holiness to the unbelievers around us. Folks should look at us and see that we are **set apart** and **different**.

Well, not only do we see a holy **God**, and a holy **people**, but we also see:

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## 3) A Holy Priesthood

The Jewish priesthood belonged only to the tribe of Levi. Every priest was a Levite, but not every Levite was a priest. The men of the tribe of Levi who were not priests were assigned as assistants to the priests.

God insisted that the priests be holy men, set apart and consecrated to His service alone.

We're going to see many things about the Levitical priesthood in the weeks to follow, but I want to just say this:

Every believer in Jesus Christ is a priest of God today! In the Old Testament, God's people **had** a priesthood; but in the New Testament, God's people **are** a priesthood. Just as Israel was God's "chosen race of people", Peter tells us that we are "**God's chosen race**" and we are also "**a royal priesthood.**"

Well, not only is our **God** holy and He has a holy **people** and a holy **priesthood**, but, in Leviticus, we will also see:

## 4) A Holy Land

When God made His covenant with Abraham, He promised him a land that would always belong to Abraham's descendants. When Moses led the people out of bondage, they were to go to the land and settle in it. We know that as a result of unbelief and lack of trust on the part of the people, God made them wander in the wilderness for 40 years before they were finally allowed to go in and possess the land.

We all know the sad thing that happened in the land that God gave to the children of Israel. 1) They **never possessed** all that God gave them. (Dr. John Phillips says they didn't possess but about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the land that God gave them.) 2) They **were taken from** the land because of their sin and idolatry. 3) They **were allowed back** into the land for several hundred years. 4) Then, they were **once again expelled** from the land and for 2,000 years, they did not live in the land of Israel that God had given to them.

They're back in their land now, but they're back not in belief but unbelief. One day, Paul tells us in the Book of Romans that all Israel will be saved and one day, God will send His Son back to set up His kingdom in that Holy Land...and this brings us to our last point...

## 5) A Holy Savior

My hope and prayer is that we will see the Person and work of Jesus in Leviticus. Hebrews 10:1 tells us that the law was "a shadow of good things to come."

God doesn't do anything haphazardly or without purpose. What the Old Testament Jews saw only in shadows, believers today see in the bright light of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, in the time we have left, let's quickly look at the sacrifices in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. This will not be an in depth study of these sacrifices...but, I'm going to ask you **to pay attention!** God is a God **of order** and He has given **specific instructions** how He was to be worshiped. Though we don't follow this sacrificial system today, God wants us to be familiar with it because **it foreshadowed the sacrifice of His dear Son on the Cross of Calvary.**

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## 1) The Burnt Offering (1:1-17)

This is an offering of total dedication to God. It could be offered in the form of a bull, a goat, a sheep or even a bird if you were poor and didn't have a herd or flock.

It had to be a male, without blemish...a picture giving their best.  
It was to be totally consumed...a picture of total commitment.

Not only was this a picture of God expecting a total commitment of the best that man had to offer Him...it was, more importantly, **a picture of God's offering His best for man.** God offered His **only** Son...His **perfect** only Son, **without spot or blemish...without stain of any kind of sin...**and His perfect only Son was totally committed to laying down His life that you and I could have fellowship with God.

My husband and I have been at the cabin a few days this past week, and while we were there, I finished reading the book **When God Weeps**. This book was co-written by Joni Eareksen Tada, and she tells of the film ***Sleeper*** where Woody Allen plays a character who wakes up in another century, having been frozen in a scientific experiment. He is given a stack of photographs of famous people from **our** century to identify. As he identifies each person, he gives a hilarious one-liner about the person, and this, of course, evokes much laughter from the audience. Billy Graham's picture comes up. Allen pauses, then says, "Billy Graham...claimed to have a personal relationship with God." The audience, of course, cracks up. **That is how absurd the idea of having a personal relationship with God sounds to unbelievers.** And, when you stop and think about it...it is an astonishing claim, isn't it?

But, you know what's even more astonishing? **God doesn't think it's absurd.** He desired a personal relationship with sinful man, so much that He gave His spotless only Son to be sacrificed for you and for me, and for Billy Graham and even for Woody Allen if Woody Allen would accept Jesus Christ as his sin substitute.

## 2) The Meal Offering (2:1-16)

This offering could be offered plain or cooked...accompanied by oil and frankincense.

Obviously, this was not a blood offering. It was to be an expression of praise to God for the blessings of their harvest...for His provision.

Also, it could be understood as a commitment to God of their everyday, routine lives since grain or flour and oil were used every day in their meal preparation.

Think about...most of our everyday life is not spectacular. Most of our everyday life is ordinary and average.

God doesn't deserve our praise just when He does something spectacular for us...when He rescues us from danger or heals our illnesses, or miraculously pays our bills. Example: man who had his hospital bill written off...

He also deserves our praise just for what He does in our everyday lives...for giving us "this day our daily bread."

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While I was working on the lesson at the cabin this week, I glanced over on the wall at a little poem that I had done in calligraphy a long time ago. This little poem begins "O God, let me be Your servant

in success, as in failure,  
let me feel as close to you in  
happiness as in heartbreak..."

God deserves our praise and our sacrifice and our service all the time!!

### 3) The Peace Offering (3:1-17)

This was a fellowship offering. It was a blood offering that served as an exercise in worship in which the Jewish child of God simply fellowshiped with God.

When was the last time you simply fellowshiped with God?

You know...we find the time to fellowship with each other, don't we?  
I mean, we go to great lengths...lots of trouble to fellowship with each other, don't we? And, there's absolutely nothing wrong with enjoying sweet koinonia with each other!! But, I believe God is so pleased when we set aside a time when there are **no distractions...no phones...no doorbells**...just a time of sweet fellowship with Him.

### 4) The Sin Offering (4:1-5:13)

This was a blood offering for unintentional sin.

It's interesting to note that **no one was exempt from this...**

- 4:3 – the priest
- 4:13 – the whole congregation
- 4:22 – leader
- 4:27 – one of the common people

That covers everyone, doesn't it? Whether the sin is committed **corporately**, or **individually**, or by the **priest** or by the **leader**. Also, the higher the sinner's position in the nation, the more expensive the sacrifice. The greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility and the consequence.

**My, how times have changed!!**

Then, the last sacrifice mentioned was

### 5) The Trespass Offering (5:14-6:17;7:1-10)

This was a blood offering made for two kinds of sin:

- a) sins against the holy things of the Lord
- b) sins against one's neighbor

This involved making restitution and the priest was the one who would determine if the restitution met all of God's requirements.

This ritual involved the sinner

- a) confessing the sin

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- b) restoring the property involved
- c) paying a fine equivalent to 20% of the value of the damaged property

Our sins hurt God and they hurt others. True repentance will always bring with it a desire to make restitution. We will want to make things right with God and with those we've sinned against.

Well, folks, we haven't even begun to touch the details of these offerings, but what we have seen should make us realize

the awfulness of sin,  
the seriousness of our confession and repentance  
the requirement of restitution if possible.

**Let me ask you this...if the Jews were commanded to do this, why aren't we? I mean, why don't we come to church bringing or dragging or carrying our animals for sacrifice?**

Well, it's because God never accepted the blood of bulls and goats as the **final payment for sin**.

God required that blood be shed as an "atonement." Atonement means "to cover over."

The blood of bulls and goats didn't actually take away sin. It covered over sin until Christ came to take our sin away!!

J. Vernon McGee: "...**God saved "on credit" in the Old Testament.**

When Christ came, as the  
hymn accurately states it,  
'Jesus paid it all...' He paid  
it all as far as the past is concerned...  
as far as the present is concerned...  
as far as the future is concerned..."

Let me just read you what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 9:11-14...

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Hebrews 10:4: "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats **to take away sins.**"

Let me use an illustration that Dr. Gray Allison used at our church several years ago.

If I write you a note and I make a mistake and I want to correct that mistake, I can either cross that word out, or I can use correction fluid – "white out" – on that word. **In both cases, the word is still there, isn't it?**

But, if I used ink remover...there used to be such a thing a long time ago...then that word is gone...the ink on the paper is gone, isn't it?

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Now, the blood of bulls and goats in Leviticus could atone for the sins of the people...(atone – “cover over”). It could **cover over** the sins, just like the white out could **cover over** the mistake I made in your note. **But, the blood of Jesus removes the stain of sin!!**

**Romans 5:9 tells us that the blood of Jesus justifies us!! We stand before God justified...just as if I've never sinned!!**

“What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus...  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus...”

Oh, precious is that flow  
That washes white as snow...  
No other fount I know  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”

Beloved, aren't you grateful we have the privilege of studying Leviticus?

Aren't you grateful that God loves us and wants a personal relationship with us?

Aren't you grateful God has made that relationship a possibility that can become a reality?

Aren't you grateful the blood of Jesus makes it a reality?

Is this relationship with God a reality in your life? Have you been washed in the blood of Jesus? Do you have the sacrifice of Christ between you and your sins? God sees the Lord Jesus Christ as the only One who can satisfy Him for your sins. Have you seen Him like that?

**Are you still trying to bring your self-effort and your little goodness to offer to God?**

Beloved, that is not acceptable to God. He accepts only what Jesus has done for you at the Cross. If you aren't certain, please don't leave this church today without coming to the Cross and letting the blood of Jesus wash away all your old dirty sins!!