

Leviticus

Offering on the Day of Atonement



Because of this church's generosity, my wife and I had the privilege to go to Europe in 2005 for our 25th wedding anniversary. We toured England and Scotland. We had done a little research before we went, and of course one of the places my wife really wanted to go was to the royal residences of Queen Elizabeth. I had read on a government web site that you can tell when the queen is at home by the Royal Standard (flag) flying on the mast. If you were outside one of the royal residences, like Buckingham Palace, and the Union Jack (the flag of Britain) was being flown, that means she is not home. But if you see the Royal Standard flying high, you know the queen is home. So you can imagine that as we rounded that corner and stood in front of Buckingham Palace, the first thing we looked for was the flag to see if she was at home. If she were at home, I'm sure we would have stood there for hours hoping to get a glimpse of the queen of England, however, the queen wasn't home that day. We still stayed a little while, but we never saw the queen.

As we get ready to exit into Leviticus, remember we are coming out of Exodus. The last thing we saw in Exodus was the children of Israel at Mount Sinai constructing a tabernacle where God was going to dwell with His people. When the tabernacle was finished and it had been properly dedicated, all of a sudden the glory cloud of God filled the tabernacle. That glory cloud said to the children of Israel, God is in His rest; God is at home with His people. In Genesis and Exodus, we had many people and

many events. It was so easy to divide those books up in a way that you could easily grasp the content. But there is just one event in Leviticus. When we exit into Leviticus, you see the tabernacle and Moses standing at the door. God is speaking to Moses and then Moses is going to speak to the people. Now you and I know that this is the book that usually derails our New Year's resolution of reading through the Bible in a year. We hum through Genesis, we roar through Exodus, and after about three chapters of Leviticus, it's over; we're looking for a by-pass.

Leviticus takes its name from the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe. Now when we come out of Exodus into Leviticus, you are immediately going to see a change of landscape. You see, Exodus was about redemption; God getting Israel out of Egypt. The book of Leviticus is not a book of redemption, it is a book of sanctification. The book of Leviticus is not about God getting Israel out of Egypt; it is going to be about God getting Egypt out of Israel. Did you catch that? I told you that the book of Exodus might appear to be a book about Israel, but it is really about the God of Israel. It is going to be clear that Yahweh, the God of redemption, is also the God of sanctification.

Now, I know some of us wonder what purpose spending time in Leviticus will do for us. It is an Old Testament book about the priesthood, the tribe of Levi, primarily. It is particularly about one family, and that is Aaron's family. The purpose is because Israel was a people with priests. Today, God's people are a people of priests; that's good. The children of Israel was constituted of people on the basis of a conditional covenant of their obedience. Today, according to 1st Peter chapter 2, the Church has been constituted a holy priesthood, and a royal priesthood. It is not based on our obedience, it is based on the obedience of Christ to God. Just as God was concerned about the holiness, the sanctification, of His people of old, He is still concerned about the sanctification of His people today. Just as God was concerned about the conduct of the priesthood who represented Him before the people, God is concerned today about His church of priests who represent Him; not only to the Church, but to the world.

God Speaks to Moses

This book is going to be so easy to remember because there is just one event; Moses standing at the door of the tabernacle talking to God. God is talking to him, and here we are standing out in the yard. Have you ever been with somebody who pulled up to somebody else's house? They went to the door and knocked on the door. The person came to the door and they are standing on the porch. You know why they are there, but you are out in the truck in the driveway, and you really want to know what is being said on the porch. You can't wait for the guy who is on the porch to get back in the truck to tell you what the guy who came out of the house said.

When we read the book of Leviticus; that is the excitement we are to have! God, in His residence, speaking to Moses, and the children are out in the yard. The children are hungering to know what God is going to say to them, and the first thing He says to them in the first seven chapters is that when you approach Me, you have to approach Me My way. Did you hear that? Boy, we have lost that in our culture! Today, it is almost like we are in a search for who can do this so differently; who can come up with another way to worship God that will be different, that will be fresh, so that it will draw more people to the House of the Lord. That is not what God is into. God is into Himself, and He has clearly said how man can approach Him. A man's commitment, a man's communion, and a man's cleansing, which were all involved in these first seven chapters of the sacrifice, had to be done God's way.

I want you to write down Leviticus 1:4. This is the first redemptive marker in Exodus:

"He shall lay His hand on the head of the burnt offering and it shall be accepted for Him to make atonement for Him."

Sacrifice for Atonement

When you study Leviticus 1-7, from God's perspective to the priest, to the people, if a person was going to approach God, he had to bring something. What you were bringing wasn't just to God, it was actually going to take your place. It was something you weren't; it had to be without blemish.

Therefore, the worshipper would lay their hand on their ram, calf, goat, or lamb, and when they did that, when they touched that animal, they were saying, 'I am sinful. My commitment is not what it ought to be, my communion is not what it ought to be, and I have sin in my life. When you would lay your hand on that animal that was without spot, without blemish, it was going to become your substitute. Did you get that? The first seven chapters of Leviticus teaches that God is holy and man cannot approach Him except on the basis of the blood of another. The blood of the other actually meant the other had to forfeit its life in order for a man to be right with God, who is holy. Do you think we really have that concept of just how sinful humanity is as it stands in the presence of a God who is holy, holy, holy?

Then in chapters 8-10, the Bible is going to single out the family of Aaron to be a priest. What is cool is that God basically tells Moses that before the priests have access to me, they have to be washed, they got to be clothed, and they have to be anointed before they can bring the offering of the people into My presence. Unless they are washed, unless they are clothed, unless they are anointed, they cannot come into My presence; I will not accept anything from them. It is amazing how the New Testament says that we, as a holy priesthood, and a royal priesthood, have been washed, we have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and we have been anointed with the third person of the triune Godhead, His Holy Spirit. Based on the blood of Jesus Christ that did away with the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, we, as believer-priests, minister into the presence of God and can come into His presence at any moment, any time, of any day.

Now, the Levitical priests are being ordained; being set apart. All of a sudden, Nadab and Abihu, who are in this modern seeker movement of, wow, we are some body, it's all about us, so let's see what we can do for God, begin to play with the offering. Now, don't let it bother you when the King James Version says, they put strange fire on the altar; that just means they didn't do what God wanted them to do, they came up with their own thing. I don't know where we read our Bible and get that God wants us to come up with our own thing. Where has God ever told us that

it's about the people who are doing the worshipping rather than the God who is being worshipped? So do you know what God did? Man, He killed them, as Jerry Clower used to say, graveyard dead!

God: Set Apart and Glorified

I want you to look at redemptive marker number two in Leviticus 10:3:

"Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace."

Who knows what the motivation of Aaron's kids really were, but God strikes them dead. Aaron has just given his two sons to ministry, and I can see Aaron wanting to say something. But when the Lord said to Moses, "Among those who are near me (talking about the priests) I will be sanctified." God is saying, I will be set apart, I will not be treated like a human, I will be treated like who I am; I am Yahweh. See, the problem here was these two boys; it wasn't about God. I just wonder what would happen today in the church of Jesus Christ, if we were not under grace and still under law, how many of you would be dead right now? God said, "Those who are near, I will be sanctified." He is saying I will be set aside, I will be made distinct; I will be the holy other One. The priests have got to get it together, they have to have it right, because God wants all the people to know who He is, and in the midst of all the people, God wants to be made known; He wants to be glorified. But it starts with the priests. The priests setting apart the Lord, so that ultimately He can be glorified among all.

Next, we get into the animal kingdom. If you are a hunter, you love this. God just start telling all the animals that you can eat. You know, we started out eating plants and seeds, and then the Noahic covenant came out and God said now you can eat everything. But when He constitutes His children, He is says not everything out there is clean; some of it is going to be unclean. I have had a lot of people ask me why this animal is clean and

this animal unclean? I say, "Because God said so." God didn't give a big long health explanation. He just said this one is clean, this one is not; eat this one, don't eat this one. Why is God concerned about what His people eat and don't eat? Here is what you have to remember: in the word, *holiness*, is the thought of wholeness. In our culture, we are into happiness, and happiness is about being whole. No...*holiness* is about being whole. Our desire as priests of God should not be to be happy. Our desire as priests should be to be whole. And in the wholeness of man, (body, soul, spirit) God is concerned about man, not only emotionally and spiritually, but He is concerned about man physically. So He has designated some things clean and some things unclean to the children of Israel. But her His primary purpose was that every time a man went out in the woods to hunt and saw an unclean animal, he was supposed to realize that they were in a land where not only are there animals that are unclean, but there are some people who are not clean. Every time he took down a clean animal, it was to remind him that he was a member of a people who had been cleansed by God. So, everything you see in the law was given for God to let Israel know, *When I get you to where I'm taking you, you are not going to be like everybody else. I don't do everybody the same. I see clean and unclean.*

I get so aggravated because I really believe there are sincere people who believe that God sees all the world the same. He absolutely does not. There is a love God has for you as part of His people that He does not have for the world! Did you catch that? Now I didn't say that He didn't love the world. But I'm telling you, He loves you differently than He loves those who do not know Him.

- **Consecrate Yourselves**

Therefore, look at Leviticus 11:44-45, "For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy." He's just been telling them that in the animal world there are things that are not clean. Now He is saying, Hey, I expect you to be clean as you live in an unclean world, and be holy, for I am holy. "You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall

therefore be holy, for I am holy." Note our progression. When God tells the children of Israel to be holy because He is holy, He is saying that the whole purpose of bringing them out of Egypt is for Him to be their God. I've said this many times; the gospel of Christ is not man centered; it is God centered. This is big. We have too many churches that are putting man at the center instead of putting God at the center. Before God ever told Israel that He did this to make them His people, He said, I did this to be your God. The priesthood is not about man, the priesthood is about God.

Isn't this what Paul was saying in Ephesians 1? I love this! The apostle Paul wrote one of the strongest theological books in the Bible that we all love to read. When he starts out, the first thing he tells us is we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy, and in love, He predestined us to adoption. I've had people tell me that they have never heard sermons on those topics. I've had preachers tell me they have never preached it to their congregation. And I'm thinking, how do you get around it? What do you do? Tear out the first part of Ephesians? Why does Ephesians start with God? It is because salvation is ultimately to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Then when he talks about Jesus and what He did in bringing us forgiveness and redemption and how God is working to unite all things that are under Him into oneness, and it is to the praise of His grace. Then, at the very moment of your salvation, the moment you believe, God seals you with the Holy Spirit, and it is to the praise of His grace! It is not to make you happy, it is to reveal that He is holy.

By the time we get to Isaiah, He is not going to be just holy, He is going to be holy, holy, holy. So, we have a God whose wants to be our God. What does this mean? He wants to be the sovereign Lord over your life. Did you know that when the monarch dies in England, they never lower the Royal Standard to half-mast? The reason is because England, built on the foundation of Christian principles, does not believe the sovereign ever die. Now catch this...we kind of put the mast up and down a lot, don't we? Yes, He's alive; He's sovereign over me today...whoops, not today...

You see, what is going to happen from chapters 11-15, we'll start talking about things that is just going to gross us out that we're not going to get. But God is not only concerned about what happens at the dinner table,

He's concerned about what happens in the bedroom. You understand that, don't you? He's concerned about a mother having a special bond with a daughter. So the law of uncleanness is not the same for a son and a daughter. Because in a society of highly prized males, God said, *yes, you can go back to doing your stuff after forty days if you have a son, but if you have a girl, you hold her closer to you. Don't have a relationship with your husband; you take extra time with her.* And we thought the Equal Rights Amendment movement just started several years ago! Are you kidding me?

You know, because God knows sin is deeper than our skin, boy He deals with all those infectious diseases and things that if not treated can spread, so don't ever think God is just concerned about you. He is concerned about what you spread or do not spread to others. He is not just concerned about the holiness of the priests. He is concerned about the holiness of the priesthood and the people.

Then, He even gets down to checking out what is going on in your house. If you have something growing on your wall, you had better deal with it, because it is mentally going to affect you. And then He realizes, He had better let Aaron know not to ever do what Nadab and Abihu did and think he can take this into his own hands.

Blood Sacrifice

And then at the end of Leviticus 16, and beginning of chapter 17, He talks about the offering made on the Day of Atonement, which leads to our next redemptive marker, Leviticus 17:11:

"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."

I want you to get this. When you try to take the blood out of the sacrifice, you are taking the life out of the sacrifice, because the life of the flesh is in the blood. So to make atonement for our sins, it requires, not the blood of another, it requires the life of another. In the sacrifice, there must be the laying down of the life of the one who has been substituted in our place.

We teach our grandkids at home with pictures. I can't tell you how many picture books Memish has bought. We will be looking at those pictures and we begin to tell stories. We have noticed that our five year old grandson can now almost quote the stories word for word. As a matter of fact, he gave me a book the other day, and said, Papaw, this book says how birds can fly. I looked at the title, thinking, *man, he really read the title!* But what I discovered was that Memish had gone through that book with him so much, he knows what that book is about.

You need to see that Leviticus is a picture book, because God's children are in preschool. They are not in elementary school, or middle school, or high school yet. They are not ready for college. They are not ready for Jesus Christ to come in the flesh yet. So God give them some pictures, and in this picture, there is a bull. Before the priests can approach God, he has got to make a sacrifice for himself. He has got to take two goats and then cast lots because one of the goats is going to become God's goat, and the other goat is going to become Azazel's goat. If you read the King James it says scapegoat, but the Hebrew reading is Azazel's goat. I prefer Azazel's goat, and I'll tell you why in just a moment.

So get this picture, after he has brought blood for his sins and his family's sins, now he casts lots over the goats. The lot that falls on the goat to become God's gets slaughtered, and he takes the blood in. Now, not only does the sins of the people have to be atoned for, not only did the sin of the priest have to be atoned for, but the Ark and the Holy of Holies had to be atoned for too.

Do you get this? Don't ever think your sin only defiles you; it defiles the very presence of God! Did you hear that? The sin of man defiles the very place where God met with His people so it had to be atoned for too. The book of Hebrews teaches us that if the things on earth had to be purified, the things in Heaven had to be purified. If you think your sin only affected the planet, you have missed it. Your sin and my sin affected the universe. It affected Heaven itself!

So he takes the blood in, atonement is made, and when Aaron comes out, there is Azazel's goat. Now, remember when you were reading through the

book of Leviticus, God said not to drain the blood out of any of the animals you kill, but to do that in the tabernacle. That was because God didn't want anybody sacrificing anything to the goat demon. Guess what the name of the goat demon was? Azazel. Let me give you this picture: God's goat comes in, his life is laid down, and now he's dead. He can't finish the transaction. There sin is, in the presence of God. So what does Aaron do? He comes out and he lays his hands on Azazel's goat and he started confessing Israel's sin. Guys, this took a long time....Then he takes his hand off of Azazel's goat and a young boy leads it out into the wilderness. Blood goes in, sin comes out; blood goes out, and sin gets sent back where sin came from. Every year they had to do that, so when you got ready to eat, you didn't dare eat the blood or dare drink the blood. Why? It was because God didn't give the blood of the animal to eat or drink; He gave it only to make atonement on the altar of God for our sins.

Goal of Sanctification

Now look at this next redemptive marker, Leviticus 18:2-5, and I want every priest here to catch this:

"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. 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. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD."

The goal of our sanctification is for us to break the habit that held us before we became a Christian. I got to go sit down and talk with a brother the other night, and alcohol used to have a hold him. He knows Christ and alcohol has not had a hold on him for the past 20 years. This man has been sober over 20 years. He used to have to go to a meeting every night for a year. He told me what this book is doing for him.

Did you hear that? I don't know what you learned from the Egyptians when you were held bondage for so long, but when God brought you out and

headed you toward the Promised Land, (which is not Heaven, it's your place of ministry) He knew that in your place of ministry, you were still going to be around unclean people. But He does not want you to act like the unclean people around you; He wants you to act like your God, who is clean. So what He is saying is, in sanctification, I don't want you to be like where you have been. I don't want you to be like who you are going to be around. I want you be like Me. That is just so cool! How have we been skipping Leviticus all these years?

Be Holy

Our next redemptive marker is:

"You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

Jesus quoted one of His favorite Old Testament scriptures when He said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." It's a quotation from the book of Leviticus 19:6.

Because He is Holy

Look at our next redemptive marker. At the end of this chapter, He says:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them: I am the LORD."

Is anybody making this correlation? God expects our conduct to be rooted in His character. Because He is holy, He expects me to be holy.

The LORD Sanctifies

Look at our next redemptive marker:

"Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you."

The same God who redeemed you and got you out of sin, paid your debt off, completely. Quit saying what you can't do! Quit making excuses! Because the same God who was big enough to get you out of sin is big

enough to get sin out of you! It's not we who are sanctifying ourselves. It's the Lord God, *Yahweh*, the eternal One, who is sanctifying His priests because He wants all people to be glorified. Look at this next verse, "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine." Boy, it's taken Him a long time to tell us that, because all He's been talking about is Himself. Once we get a handle on who He is, then, we will begin to understand what kind of people He wants us to be!

The next redemptive marker is talking about the priests:

"You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy."

You know, there was a time when the world considered the church holy and they kind of set us apart. It's not happening today, is it? Look at verses 31-33 of chapter 22, *"So you shall keep my commandments and do them: I am the LORD. And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD."* If you go back and read this chapter, we are getting ready to move in on how sin affects, not only people and houses, but how it affects the land. God is basically saying that the land of Canaan will no longer let the Canaanites, the Girgashites, or the Perizzites keep living in the land, because the land is getting ready to vomit them out because all the stuff they are doing makes the land sick. So God is going to drive them out, but the land is going to vomit them out. God is saying that if you get in the land and you do what they have been doing, guess what the land will do to you? It will vomit you up too.

I have about come to believe the United States of America, the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border, is sick because of what we the people of God have done to it. Doesn't Romans 8 teach that creation is groaning? Groaning, waiting for the day that God makes us right again!

Israel as God's Servants

The next redemptive marker:

"For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

God is saying don't treat any Israelite like a slave. If I had wanted them to be slaves, I would have left them in Egypt. I brought them out of Egypt, not to be slaves to the world, but to be My servants.

Be careful how you treat other people. God wants you to treat other people like He has treated you. How has God treated you? Gracious. Then, Leviticus 26:11-13 says, *"I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect."*

Our last redemptive marker is talking about if His people sin, He is going to let the land vomit them. But He says if they ever repent:

"Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."

Where do I find consolation in this verse as a people of priests? God made a covenant with His Son, Jesus Christ, not based on our obedience, but based on His obedience. God will always remember the covenant that He made with Jesus, and because of that, you and I are eternally secure. As an eternally secure priest, our life should speak of being redeemed from sin and being sanctified from it. We should be holy for He is holy. Peter

quotes Leviticus when he tells the Christians, "As it is written, 'Be holy for I am holy.'"

There was a sacrifice made on the cross by Jesus. Jesus is your substitute; He identified with you. It took two goats, one to lose its life, one to stay alive to take the sin out of Israel into the wilderness. Jesus fulfilled all of that as the offering that was made on the Day of Atonement. He is the Lamb of God. God's lamb went into the very presence of God with our sins and laid His life down in the presence of God, after purifying the Temple in Heaven. Once atonement had been made, He got back up and walked out and when He did, our sins were cast as far as the East is from the West and God will remember them no more! He sent them back to wherever they came from, and you can be forgiven.