

Lesson Nineteen: *Proper Sacrifice*
Leviticus 1-7

Themes:

Leviticus: A holy God can only be approached by a holy people.

Leviticus 1-7: A holy people require sacrifices to remove their sins.

I. **The Centrality of Atonement**

- a. The centrality of atonement in Scripture:
 - i. *The very heart of the entire scriptures consists of that utterly crucial principle of substitutionary sacrifice and resulting atonement and reconciliation* (Nathan Pitchford, *Images of the Savior*, 136-37).
- b. Atonement: the problem, promise, and sign in Genesis 3:
 - i. **Problem:** *The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings* (Gen 3:7).
 1. Sin separates man from God.
 2. Man cannot cover (atone for) his own sin.
 - ii. **Promise:** *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel* (Gen 3:15).
 1. Atonement is ultimately fulfilled in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ.
 - iii. **Sign:** *The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them* (Gen 3:21).
 1. A holy people require sacrifices to remove their sins.
 - a. *Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness* (Heb 9:22b).
 - b. Only God can suitably “cover” man’s sin and shame.
- c. Atonement: the need for purification in Isaiah 6:
 - i. *Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said; “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven”* (Is 6:6-7).
 1. The distinction between Isaiah and God (6:5; cf. Luke 5:8)
 2. The altar: purification by blood (fulfilled by the blood of Christ)
 3. The fire: purification by the Spirit (fulfilled by the ministry of the Spirit)
 4. Atonement brings reconciliation (6:7).
- d. The centrality of atonement in Leviticus:
 - i. *Substitutionary sacrifice...is precisely what was actually accomplished through that one great work for which all of history was designed, the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Son of God. And there is no more elaborate description of that absolutely central reality of all history than the sacrificial instructions contained within the book of Leviticus* (Pitchford, 137).
 1. The Hebrew word for “atonement” appears 45 times in Leviticus.
 2. The placement of Leviticus at the center of the Pentateuch
 - a. *If the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ stands at the pinnacle and climax of redemptive history, the very crux of that tree, casting its shadow backwards through the pre-incarnational history of the people of God, falls precisely upon the first seven chapters of the book of Leviticus* (Pitchford, 137).
 3. The atonement links the themes of God’s presence and His holiness.
 - a. Presence: the fulfillment of God’s promise (Ex 6:7; 40:34)
 - b. Holiness: a holy God can only be approached by a holy people.
 - i. The purity of the sacrifices, priests, and people

II. (1:1-7:38) **The Means of Atonement**

- a. God graciously provides detailed instructions for the atonement of His people.
- b. The two principal features of blood sacrifice:

- i. **The laying on of hands** (1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33):
 - 1. *Signifies the identity of the worshiper with the sacrifice, so that the latter is made to stand in the place of the former, and to undergo vicariously what the worshiper ought by rights to experience himself* (Pitchford, 137-8).
 - a. The recognition of guilt and the transfer of sin (*samak*)
 - ii. **The sprinkling of blood** (1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:6, 17; 5:9):
 - 1. *Signifies the pleasing effects of that substitutionary slaughter, namely, redemption, forgiveness, purification, and acceptance with God* (Pitchford, 138).
 - a. Blood is the only cleansing agent for sin (Rom 5:9; Eph 1:7).
- c. The major types of sacrifices:
- i. **The burnt offering** (Lev 1; 6:8-13): Consumption
 - 1. A reminder of man's sinfulness
 - a. The ongoing nature of the sacrifice
 - b. The ongoing need to "lean" upon a substitute
 - 2. A reminder of God's acceptance (1:9, 13, 17)
 - a. Through the "covering" of blood (expiation and propitiation)
 - b. Through the complete consumption (pouring out) of the sacrifice
 - ii. **The grain offering** (Lev 2; 6:14-23): Dedication
 - 1. Fulfilled in Christ:
 - 2. *Flour and oil* (2:1): the body of Christ broken as the bread of His people
 - 3. *Frankincense* (2:1): the sweet aroma of our Lord's prayers (John 17)
 - 4. *No leaven or honey* (2:11): Christ's sinless perfection
 - 5. *First fruits* (2:14): Christ is the first fruit (I Cor 15:20)
 - 6. *Salt* (2:13): Christ is the fulfillment of the Lord's enduring covenant
 - 7. Our response:
 - 8. All that we have is to be offered first, freely, and joyfully to God.
 - iii. **The peace (fellowship) offering** (Lev 3; 7:11-38): Praise
 - 1. Given in thanksgiving, the fulfillment of a vow, or of one's freewill
 - 2. Emphasizes the *results* of the sacrifice: fellowship with God and others
 - 3. In Christ we have peace with God (Rom 5:1) and others (Eph 2:14).
 - iv. **The sin offering** (Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30): Cleansing
 - 1. Offered for *specific* sins: an emphasis on sins committed unintentionally or in ignorance (Note: a sacrifice is still required!).
 - 2. Emphasizes the pervasive nature of sin and its impact on the entire community (priests, congregation, rulers, commoners)
 - 3. Emphasizes the need for true repentance and the forgiveness found through sacrifice
 - a. *When [sinners] ...place their hands upon the head of Jesus, and lean upon Him in faith, His sprinkled blood will find them forgiveness with God, and purification for their sins* (Pitchford, 140).
 - v. **The guilt offering** (Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-10): Restitution
 - 1. Emphasizes sin's debt and the price that must be paid for restitution
 - 2. The price is set by God (Rom 6:23).
 - 3. The believer's debt is paid in full (I Peter 1:18-19; I Cor 6:20).

III. Atonement Fulfilled

- a. Christ is the sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29).
- b. Christ's death is the believer's ransom (Mark 10:45).
- c. Christ is the believer's scapegoat (Lev 16:10).
- d. Christ's blood is the eternal cleansing agent (I John 1:7).
- e. Christ is the perfect High Priest (Heb 9; 10).
- f. Christ's death opened the way to God for all believers (Matt 27:51; Heb 10:19-20).

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself (Hebrews 7:26-27).