

Place: Lurgan Baptist 29:10:2013

Reading: Leviticus 1:1-9

## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

### 4. THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

I wonder, what do you think of when you hear the name “*Leviticus* ?” Maybe you think of Levi’s blue jeans. Or maybe you think of nothing, it just sounds obscure. If you have read this book maybe you think of priests, or sacrifices or loots of rules, and still it sounds obscure. That is the way Leviticus is. Mind it does have some famous parts. *For example did you know that America’s Liberty Bell takes its name from this book ?* If you have seen the bell in Philadelphia you probably saw the words inscribed on the bell. “*Proclaim Liberty Leviticus 25:10.*” My .... that’s from this book. Yet many people who resolve to read the Bible through get stuck in Leviticus. A certain lady on being asked if she had ever read the Bible through replied, “*I have never read it through though I have read much of it consecutively. Three times I have started to read it through, but each time I have broken down in Leviticus. I have enjoyed Genesis and Exodus but Leviticus has seemed such dull reading that I have become discouraged and have given up.*”

My .... is that how you feel when you approach

Leviticus ? Do you find it boring ? Do you feel it is like trying to read the telephone directory ? Maybe we find it so difficult because it so unfamiliar. It is from a different culture as well as having a different content. We are moving away from our present situation by 3,000 years and 2,000 miles. It’s a totally different world and that’s why we may find so strange. I mean we don’t arrive at church today with a lamb or pigeon and then give it to the leader who then slits its throat in front of the whole congregation. *We don’t do that, do we ?* And then again this book seems so irrelevant. I mean, what has Leviticus got to say to me today ? What truth from Leviticus can I rest on as I go into work with an ungodly crowd on Monday morning ? Well, lets try and bring Leviticus to life shall we ? Think about the,

#### 1. The Period of the Book:

The laws of Leviticus were given in the wilderness. The book covers a period in Israel’s history of less than two months at the beginning of the second year after the exodus from Egypt, from the first day of the first month to the twentieth day of the second month. ( Ex 40:17 Num 10:11 -1443 B.C. ) 1.

#### 2. The Place of the Book:

As we said last time week, all 5 books of the Pentateuch begin with a conjunction, which tells us that it is one single book, written by one single author. Do you see how Leviticus opens? It opens with the word “***And.***” Thus, Leviticus is a continuing story of Exodus. Exodus ended

with the design of the Tabernacle, Leviticus begins with the declaration from the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was designed as a place for the people to meet with God, and in Leviticus God meets with His people. Dr. G. Scroggie says,

*Mark the connection between Exodus and Leviticus. In the one the people are brought nigh to God, and in other they are kept nigh. In Exodus we read of God's approach to us, but in Leviticus of our approach to God. In the one book Christ is the Saviour, and in the other He is the Sanctifier. Exodus reveals God as Love Leviticus reveals God as Light. In the one we are brought into union with Him, and in the other we are brought into communion. Exodus offers us pardon but Leviticus calls us to purity.*

Now it's interesting that Genesis is the book of beginnings and it tells you how everything began from the creation of the universe to Israel becoming God's people. The book of Exodus is all about Israel coming out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb. Leviticus gets its name from the tribe of the Levites. Levi was the name of Jacob's third son and Leviticus means "*pertaining to the Levites,*" and the Levites were the persons responsible for the service of the tabernacle. ( Num 3:1-13 ) *Now there is a pattern emerging here if you see it ?* Genesis is a **universal** book, it's about everybody, the human race and the whole universe. Exodus is a **national** book its focus is on one people the nation of Israel. But in Leviticus the focus is even more narrow, only on one tribe out of the whole nation. So we could say that Genesis is **universal**, and Exodus is **national**, but Leviticus is **tribal**. Now I wonder

is that why so many get stuck in Leviticus ? I mean we are interested in universal things, even national things but we are less concerned when the focus is just on one tribe, especially if that tribe is not ours. So here we are in Leviticus focusing on one tribe ( Levi ) zooming in one place Mount Sinai ( 27:34 ) taking into account regulations that were given over a period of one month. So what's,

### **3. The Purpose of the Book:**

To provide guidelines, to the priests and people for the appropriate worship of God. You see, in Exodus God had prepared a place for worship, the Tabernacle. In Leviticus God reveals a pattern for worship. The Israelites are to understand that they are separated by God, to God and for God. So Leviticus was written to show Israel how to live as a holy nation in fellowship with God. Now,

### **4. The Parts of the Book:**

Are easily discerned. Henrietta Mears divides Leviticus into 2 main themes. The offerings, in the first part of the book, remind us to "**Get Right.**" The feasts, in the latter part of the book, remind us to "**Stay Right.**" The first part covers Chapters 1 to 17, and the second part covers chapters 18 to 27. Now what is it that so clearly breaks the book into these two parts ? Well, the first part has to do with worship, the second part has to do with practice. In the first part everything relates to the tabernacle, in the second part everything relates to conduct. Part one shows the way to God by sacrifice, part two shows the walk with

God by sanctification. In the first part purification is provided, in the second part punishment is to be inflicted. The first part has to do with the people's cleansing, the second part has to do with the people's clean living. Now do you see how the book opens ? ( 1:1 ) You see, the contents of Leviticus are God's Word communicated to and through his servant Moses. Andrew Bonar says,

***There is no book in the whole of Scripture that contains more of the very words of God than Leviticus. It is God that is the direct speaker in almost every page.***

Indeed the Lord Jesus Himself believed that Moses was the human author of this book as He quoted from it in the New Testament. ( Matt 8:4 Lev 14:2-10 ) Now as I have said the book divides into 2 parts.

### **(1) THE WAY TO GOD BY SACRIFICE ( Ch's 1-17 )**

And this speaks to us of the Work of the Son for us. You see. Leviticus is a book of sacrifice and blood, themes that are repulsive to modern minds. Mankind wants a "bloodless religion," they want morality without sacrifice and yet this is impossible. Every Israelite was aware of the fact that, since the beginning, God had insisted on sacrifice as the ground upon which He was to be approached. However, now the time had come for the sacrifices to be made a vital part of their daily lives. So right here we are introduced to,

#### **(a) THE OFFERINGS:**

These were the offerings of the Tabernacle. There were five main offerings and each kind is described by a separate chapter in Leviticus 1-5.

- 1. The Burnt Offering ( Ch 1 )**
- 2. The Meal Offering ( Ch 2 )**
- 3. The Peace Offering ( Ch 3 )**
- 4. The Sin Offering ( Ch 4 )**
- 5. The Trespass Offering ( Ch 5 )**

Now these five offerings can be divided into three and two. The first three are "sweet savour," offerings. ( 1:9 2:2 3:5, 16 ) The remaining two are non-sweet savor offerings. Each one shows us a different aspect of the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The two sin offerings, that is the sin offering and the trespass offering depict what Calvary means to us, the three sweet savour offerings depict what Calvary means to God.

John Philips says,

***The sin offerings reveal how the holiness of God is satisfied by the work of the cross, the sweet savour offerings tell us how the heart of God is satisfied by the work of Christ. The sin offerings set before us the reasons for the cross, the sweet savour offerings set before us the results of the cross. In the sin offerings God deals with our wickedness in the sweet savour offerings God deals with our worship. In the sin offerings God deals with us as sinners, in the sweet savour offerings God deals with us as saints.***

#### **1. Look at the Sin Offerings:**

There were two kinds of sin offerings. Both were designed to bring before us the enormity of our guilt before God. We tend to take a complacent view of our sin, but the Lord does nothing of the kind. Our sin kindles His wrath on the one side and His compassion on the other. Now

### 1. The Sin Offering:

Reminds us that “*Christ was made sin for us.*”  
( 2 Cor 5:21 )

### 2. The Trespass Offering:

Underscores, the individual acts of sin. ( 5:1-3 ) In both offerings sin was looked upon as a debt to be paid and of course that debt was fully and finally paid by Christ. But,

## **2. Look at the Sweet Savour Offerings:**

### 1. The Burnt Offering: Christ's Devotion was Full

It was complete. You see, the burnt offering was all for God. There was no sharing here. All for God for God must come first. What a picture of our Lord's dedication of Himself to God. “*Lo I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will O My God, yea thy law is within my heart.*” ( Ps 40:7-8 ) My .... is your devotion to the Lord full ? Have you presented your body as “*a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God ?*”

### 2. The Meal Offering: Christ's Devotion was Flawless:

The word “*meat,*” means “*meal,*” for there is no blood involved in this offering. It could be fine flour, flour baked into cakes, or even dried ears of corn. But everything about the meal offering was designed to set before us the marvelous sinless humanity of our Lord Jesus. The floor for instance was to be fine floor, flour ground and ground until it was completely smooth and free from all unevenness. My .... there was no roughness, no unevenness in the Lord Jesus. He was perfectly balanced, “*holy harmless, undefiled separate from sinners.*” ( Heb 7:26 ) May the Spirit of God so work in us that we become like Him, balanced, even, fragrant and pure.

### 3. The Peace Offering: Christ's Devotion was Fruitful:

For the idea of this offering was that of communion, for the offerer and the priest sat down together in the presence of God and feasted upon the sacrifice together. ( 7:28-34 ) It was kind of a “*Lord's Supper,*” in Old Testament times. You see, fellowship with God means fellowship also with God's people. Now are you beginning to see this elaborate sacrificial system ? *It formed the very core of Israel's public worship.* God is holy and He will not permit sin in His presence. In order to establish a relationship between God and sinners a sacrifice has to be made substituting a pure life for a sinful one. Atonement – “*at-one-ment,*” means the reconciling through substitution of those have been estranged. So the life of the animal is accepted in the place of the life of the sinner. ( Heb 9:22 ) But all was pointing to Christ. Leviticus often uses the word “*atonement,*” meaning to cover. You see, the blood shed

on the altar in this book could only “*cover*,” for sin until Christ shed His blood on the cross paying the real price that God demanded for sin’s cleansing.

**For not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain  
Could give the guilty conscience peace  
Or take away the stain  
But Christ the heavenly Lamb  
Takes all our sins away  
A sacrifice of nobler worth  
And richer blood than they**

Of course if fellowship with God is to be maintained there must not only be a sacrifice ( Ch’s 1-7 ) but a priest. So

### ***(b) THE PRIESTHOOD:***

Is introduced to us in ( Ch’s 8-10 ) Now what was a priest ? Well, the term “*priest*,” means “*one who officiates*.” A prophet was someone who represented God to the people, a priest was someone who represented the people to God. Now of course Leviticus “*pertaining to the Levites the priests*.” You see, if you were going to function in the priestly office you had to be a Levite. ( Ex 28:1 Num 3:7 ) Now Aaron Israel’s first high priest is a remarkable type of Christ our great high priest, and Aaron’s sons foreshadow we who are believer priests. Now in ( Ch 8 ) we have the consecration of the priests.

#### **1. They were Purified:**

There was a Judicial Cleansing: a bullock was the sin

offering that has to be slain to atone for Aaron and his sons. ( 8:14 ) There was also a Moral Cleansing: for Moses “*washed them with water*.” ( 8:6 ) My .... do we not need to be cleansed continually from the daily defilement of sin ? The Psalmist says, “*Wherewith all shall a young man cleanse his way ? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*.” ( 119:9 ) 1.

#### **2. They were Sanctified:**

Look at ( 8:22-24 ) Do you see what happened ? Moses put the blood of the sacrifice on Aaron’s right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. Then he did the same for Aaron’s sons. The lesson is plain. The consecrated ear is open to hear the Word of God, the consecrated hand is ready to serve the Lord and the consecrated foot is guided by the Lord. I mean our Lord’s ear was always open to hear and obey His Father’s voice, His hands were busy ministering to those in need and His feet were always walking in the paths of righteousness. *Tell me, are you set apart like that ?* It’s evident that Nadab and Abihu weren’t for they served the Lord presumptuously and God cut them off. ( 10:2 ) But notice these priests 1. 2.

#### **3. They were Qualified:**

For Aaron and his sons were anointed with oil a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Do you recall that it was said of the Lord Jesus “*Behold my servant .... I will put my Spirit upon him*.” ( Matt 12:18 ) And as Christ stepped out of Jordan after His baptism the Spirit came upon Him like a dove.

( Matt 3:16 Lk 4:18 ) My .... do you realize that you cannot function with unction ? That you need that conscious, constant dependence on the Holy Spirit otherwise our ministries will be wanting. Of course today we do not “*have,*” a priesthood, we are *a “priesthood.”* Peter says we are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood. ( 1 Pet 2:5-9 ) Tell me, are we fulfilling our priestly duties ? Do you know *dumb* priests are ? Brethren, who never lift their hearts to God in prayer and praise ? ( Heb 13:15 ) Do you know *disobedient* priests are ? Believers who have never taken seriously their responsibility to give to the work of the Lord. ( Phil 4:18 ) Do you know what *dull* priests are ? Christians who have lost their vitality, to do anything worthwhile for the Lord. Now if any Biblical confirmation is needed for the old proverb “*cleanliness is next to godliness,*” chapters 11 to 16 would do. For here there is brought before us,

### (c) **THE PEOPLE:**

God’s people who must be a clean people. Isn’t it interesting here that holiness in God’s people concerns the body as well as the soul. I mean this section insists on

1. Clean foods: Ch 11
2. Clean bodies: Ch 12 -13:46
3. Clean clothes: 13:47-59
4. Clean houses: 14:33-57
5. Clean contacts: Ch 15:
6. A Clean nation: Ch 16

For there is brought us “*The Day of Atonement,*”

( Yom Kippur ) which was the high point of all sacrifices. Here was provision for any and every sin not covered by the specific offerings mentioned in the first seven chapters. Now this first section of the book ends with,

### (d) **THE ALTAR:**

( 17:3-9 Exod 27:1 ) Time and again, it’s the door of the tabernacle, it’s the brazen altar. For there is only one place where God has chosen to meet with penitent sinners and that is the cross of which the altar at the door of the tabernacle was a type. My .... there is no other sacrifice, no other priest, no other altar. “*None other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*” ( Acts 4:12 ) Indeed in this very chapter we read, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood .... it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*” ( 17:11 ) My .... it is through the shed blood of Calvary’s Lamb .... nothing more, nothing less, nothing else that we have our salvation.

**The life is in the blood  
And must for sin atone  
One sacrifice and once for all  
The blood of Christ alone**

### (2) **THE WALK WITH GOD BY SANCTIFICATION**

You see, if the way to God underscores the work of the Son for us, then the walk with God underscores the work of the Spirit in us. I wonder as you have read the Old Testament have you ever put yourself in Jewish shoes ?

*You see, as David Pawson points out for a Jew the reason for reading Leviticus is clear, its literally a matter of life and death.* To the Jews there is only one God and that God is the God of Israel. Since there were was only one God and they were His people on earth, there was a special relationship between them. On God's side He promised to do many things for them. To be their government, to be their minister of defense and protect them, to be their minister of finance and meet all their needs, to be their minister of health so that none of the diseases of Egypt would touch. God would be everything they needed.

But in return the Lord expected them to live right and do right things. They were to be righteous and holy before the Lord. Indeed the key text of the book is right here in ( 19:2 ) My .... this is the key that unlocks the book. When God tells them they must do not something, its because the nations around them are doing it but they are to be different, to be holy because He is holy. You see, when the Lord saves you, He expects you to be like Him, He expects you to live His way, to be holy as He is holy. That's why in these closing chapters we read about,

#### ***(a) HOLY PEOPLE: ( Chs 18-20 )***

Here were a people who were to separate themselves from the practices of the surrounding nations. I mean look at ( 18:3-4 ) *You see, the Israelites were to maintain a distinctive lifestyle.* This was to be achieved by obedience to the laws that God gave through his servant Moses. Rules forbidding sexual misconduct ( 18:20 ) are found alongside compassionate provisions for the needy. ( 19:9,

13, 14 33 ) My .... do you see the value that God puts on pure sexual relationships ? ( 18:20-22 ) Incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality for all these perversions there was judgment. ( 18:29 ) What the Lord is really saying here is, that the way to be really happy is to be really holy. You see, happiness and holiness belong together and the lack of holiness brings unhappiness. Do you realise that most of us get the round way round ? God's will for us is that we be holy in this world and happy in the next, but many of us want to be happy now and holy later. (a) And then,

#### ***(b) HOLY PRIESTS: ( Ch's 21-22 )***

I mean if the people as a whole were to be holy unto the Lord how much more the priests. These chapters tell us what the priest *must not do* ( 21:1-15 ) *must not be* ( 21:16-22:16 ) *must not offer*. ( 22:17-33 ) Its interesting to notice that the Tabernacle was a three fold structure, the Outer Court, and Holy Place and Holy of Holies. This seemed to correspond to the three fold way in which the nation was arranged, the congregation, the priesthood, the High Priest. You see, just as the parts of the Tabernacle became successively holier, so it was to be with the nation. Israel's sanctification was to reach its climax in the in the High Priest who wore the golden crown inscribed with the words “ *Holiness to the Lord.* ” ( Ex 28:36 ) Brethren, in leadership are we an example to the flock in holy living ? (a) (b) And then,

#### ***(c) HOLY PERIODS: ( Ch's 23-24 )***

You see, Israel had not only 5 offerings it had 7 feasts. They had a calendar of worship to observe. Now there is no corresponding Christian calendar in the New Testament, we have no instructions about observing Christmas or Easter, but for the Jewish people a calendar was a vital part of their walk with God. Seven feasts are mentioned here in ( Ch 23 ) and all had to be kept. Seven feasts that portrayed the basic facts of redemption, even though this was something that the nation of Israel could not discern at this time. Certainly these seven feasts were memorials of past events but they were more than that. *They were foreshadowings of future events.* Now these annual feasts were seven in number.

1. Passover: speaks of the death of Christ ( 1 Cor 5:7 )
2. Unleavened Bread: speaks of a separated walk.
3. The First Fruits: typical of the resurrection.  
( 1 Cor 15:23 )
4. Pentecost: which looked forward to that day in history when the Holy Spirit came down. ( Acts 2:1 )

***Now an interval of four months elapsed between the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. ( 23:33 )***

5. The Feast of Trumpets: speaks of Israel's regathering ( Isa 27:12-13 Joel 2:15 Matt 24:29 ) But it also applies to us for we are waiting for the sound of the trumpet.
6. The Day of Atonement: illustrates to us the day of Israel's cleansing.
7. The Feast of Tabernacles: pictures that future kingdom where Jesus " *shall reign where're the sun.* " The feasts are seven in number and this being the number of completion, the picture is complete in every detail.

Here we have God's prophetic calendar, a perfect outline of God's dealing with the Jew and the Gentile from first to last. Now I want you to notice that these feasts are divided into sections of three and four.

***(1) The First Four Feasts were Literally Fulfilled by Christ at His First Coming:***

The Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost followed each other closely. Indeed all these took place in the first three months in Israel's calendar. Then an interval of four months ( 23:24 ) during which there was no feast of Jehovah. Rather there was a long pause between the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. Now that's significant. Indeed it seems to be that the truths foreshadowed in the first four feasts are related to the church, while the last three feasts are related to the nation. (a)

***(2) The Last Three Feasts will be Literally Fulfilled by Christ at His Second Coming:***

The interval between the feasts in Israel's religious calendar illustrates the time gap between the first and second advents of the Lord. As there were no feasts as far as ( Lev Ch 23 ) is concerned between Pentecost and Trumpets so there are no feasts during this present age. The church of course has one feast, that is the Lord's Supper, and this feast embraces all the truths found in these feasts. Passover reminds us of the bread and wine, symbols of His death. Unleavened Bread, speaks of holiness of life that is so necessary to a true remembrance



of Christ. First-fruits bring to mind the fact that He is risen. Pentecost, an unbroken loaf suggests the oneness of the body of Christ. In the Feast of Trumpets we show forth the Lord's death till He come. *Now do you know where we are living right now ?* We are living between the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets, and during that time Israel was busy in wheat harvest. My .... are you involved in the harvest ? Sure, you have come to God through the Lamb, you have experienced resurrection life through Christ, you are putting sin out of your life, but are you involved in the harvest ? When the Saviour comes again, will he find you faithful ? Will he find you involved in this great spiritual harvest ? Will he see you,

***Gathering in the lost ones for whom our Lord did die  
For the crowning day is coming by and by***

***(d) HOLY PRINCIPLES:***

You see, the seventh day of each week was to be kept as a "*Sabbath*," of solemn rest ( 23:3 Exod 20:8-11 ) This Sabbath principle was also to be applied to the land once the Israelites were settled. ( 25:2-7 ) Indeed these closing chapters deals with Israel's occupation of Canaan. Time and again in this closing portion of the book we read about "*the land*." The words "*If ye .... then I will*," are key terms here. ( 26:3-4 ) Likewise "*But if ye will not hearken .... then I will punish you*." ( 26:14-18 ) My .... these were not empty promises and threats. There are rewards for trusting and obeying God, but there are also punishments for those who distrust and disobey Him.

**“ Trust and obey there is no other way  
To be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”**

**So The Way to God is Through Sacrifice:  
Our Walk with God is through Sanctification:**

Being conformed to the holiness of God. My .... there is no book in the Bible than is stronger on the holiness of God than Leviticus. We learn about God's holiness from this book. Do you recall what the Hebrew letter says ? "*Let us .... serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.*" ( Heb 12:28-29 ) Do you know where he got that ? He got it straight out of Leviticus and its vital for us who have lost sight of the holiness of God. Do you know what God's Word is to you this .... ? "*Ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.*" ( 19:2 ) Leviticus tells us to be holy in every part of our lives even down to our toilet arrangements. ( 15:1 ) You see, a godly life is godly through and through or it is not godly at all. Have you a desire to be holy ?

You know a lot of believers are interested in heaven, but they are not interested in holiness. They are interested in health, but not holiness. They want happiness but not holiness. But what God wants for us more than anything else is to be holy. How are you getting on ? Are you a holy person ? Holy at all times, in all places with all people. "*Ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.*" ( 19:2 )



