

THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS

2. The Sacrificial System

At the heart of the worship of Jehovah lay a system of sacrifices, the details of which are carefully recorded in this book of *Leviticus*.

We must remember that these sacrifices were not dreamed up by men.

Nor were they copied from other ancient peoples.

Rather they were specifically revealed by the Lord Himself.

To understand their significance we must learn that the entire sacrificial system detailed in *Leviticus* stands on a number of fundamental biblical truths.

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1. God is holy; man is sinful.

The Lord repeats, *I AM HOLY* (11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8).

He speaks of *MY HOLY NAME* (22:2, 32).

Thus His house and offerings are all said to be *holy*.

2. Man is sinful and guilty.

The word *unclean* and *guilty* appear repeatedly in this book to describe the condition, actions and relations of men (5:2; 7:21 etc.).

3. The punishment of sin is death.

See, for example, 7:21; 17:10, *cut off*.

This truth is clearly demonstrated by the death of the animal victims of the various sacrifices.

4. Man cannot approach God unless and until his sin has been dealt with and God's justice has been satisfied.

- The worship of God is always on His terms, not man's.
- The very establishment of the sacrifices detailed in Leviticus proves the point:
Sinful man needs an *atonement* (1:4) and this is the only basis for his acceptance (1:3, where *of his own voluntary will* is better translated *for his acceptance*, as in 23:11).
- *Atonement* is always directed Godward to *propitiate* His righteous wrath against sin and thus *satisfy* His justice.
- Here is a truth that is fundamental to all biblical revelation to fallen man: *atonement* is the basis of our approach to God and our *acceptance* by Him.

5. The only way by which man's sin can be expiated and God's justice satisfied is by a blood sacrifice that involves the death of the victim vicariously in the place of the one who offers it.

- The Lord spells this out in 17:11.
- The New Testament expounds it in Hebrews 9:22.
- The fact that the meal offering was bloodless may appear to be an exception, but it is not.
- That offering was always presented in conjunction with a blood sacrifice, never alone.

6. To approach God, men must have the services of a mediator.

The work of sacrifice, atonement and bringing men into God's presence was the work of God's ordained priest (1:5, 7, 8 etc.).

In the Levitical offerings we have three parties:

- GOD who is the offended party, the One whose law has been broken.
- The OFFERER is the lawbreaker, who is therefore under its curse.
- The PRIEST, God's appointed and anointed representative and yet a man like the offerer, stood between these two parties.
- Hebrews 5:1-4 explains the priest's role: He is ordained *by God for men*.

7. The Levitical sacrificial system was intended to be temporary and typical; its permanent fulfilment is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Lord commanded Moses to erect the Tabernacle *according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*. In other words, the earthly Tabernacle and its service were divinely intended to express *heavenly things*, that is, spiritual or gospel truths: see Hebrews 8:5.
- The temporary nature of the sacrificial system was witnessed by the sheer number and repetitiveness of its sacrifices. Had they been actually efficacious they would not have needed to be repeated: Hebrews 10:1-2. *A perfect sacrifice needs no repetition*.
- But the language in which the Lord commands the Levitical sacrifices and the sanctions He attaches to ignoring or corrupting them proves that they embody the permanent truths set out above (17:3-9).
- Some important Old Testament texts show that the Levitical animal sacrifices were typical, pointing forward to the true sacrifice for sins: Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 13:1, 6-7.
- Thus the New Testament presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the final fulfilment of the types set forth in the Levitical offerings: John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:34-35; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:8-14, 22-23; 10: 1-4, 11-14.

8. On the ground of the accepted sacrifice, God sealed His covenant, granted Israel His presence and enabled them to live and worship in fellowship with Him.

- The very existence of the Tabernacle and its service was a blessing of the covenant. See Exodus 35: following Israel's breach of the covenant by worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32), Moses pleaded that the Lord would not remove His presence (33:15, 18). The Lord answered (chapter 34) and as a result Moses reinstated the covenant by repeating the Ten Commandments and the details of the Tabernacle's construction (chapter 35).
- Consequently *Leviticus* falls into two parts:
 - a. **Chapters 1-17**—Worshipping according God's Covenant
 - b. **Chapters 18-27**—Walking according to God's Covenant
- All of this was brought about by means of the blood of the sacrifices, or more properly, by the blood of Christ, prefigured in those sacrifices.