

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

2-3-21

Leviticus 1

God speaks to Moses from the tabernacle About The Burnt Offering - Verses 1-4

¹ The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. He said, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When anyone among you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. ³ "If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. ⁴ You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you.

1:1 The book of Leviticus begins where the book of Exodus ends—at the foot of Mount Sinai. The tabernacle was just completed (Exodus 35-40), and God was ready to teach the people how to worship there. This "tent of meeting" where God met with Moses was the tabernacle's tent. This was the centerpiece of the tabernacle complex, with its surrounding courtyard, and it contained the sanctuary (or Holy Place) in one part and the Most Holy Place with the ark in another part. These two sections were separated by a curtain. God revealed himself to Moses in the Most Holy Place. Exodus 33:7 mentions a "tent of meeting" where Moses met God before the actual tabernacle was constructed. Many believe it served the same function as the one described here.

1:1 We may be tempted to dismiss Leviticus as a record of bizarre rituals of a different age. But its practices made sense to the people of the day and offer important insights for us into God's nature and character. Animal sacrifice seems obsolete and repulsive to many people today, but animal sacrifices were practiced in many cultures in the Middle East. God used the form of sacrifice to teach his people about faith. Sin needed to be taken seriously. When people saw the sacrificial animals being killed, they were sensitized to the importance of their sin and guilt. Our culture's casual attitude toward sin ignores the cost of sin and the need for repentance and restoration. Although many of the rituals of Leviticus were designed for the culture of the day, their purpose was to reveal a high and holy God who should be loved, obeyed, and worshiped. God's laws and sacrifices were intended to bring out true devotion of the heart. The ceremonies and rituals were the best way for the Israelites to focus their lives on God.

1:2-3 Was there any difference between a sacrifice and an offering? In Leviticus the words are used interchangeably. Usually a specific sacrifice is called an offering (burnt offering, grain offering, fellowship offering). Offerings in general are called sacrifices. The point is that each person offered a gift to God by sacrificing it on the altar. In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was the only way to approach God and restore a relationship with him. There was more than one kind of offering or sacrifice. The variety of sacrifices made them more meaningful because each one related to a specific life situation. Sacrifices were given in praise, worship, and thanksgiving,

as well as for forgiveness and fellowship. The first seven chapters of Leviticus describe the variety of offerings and how they were to be used.

1:2-3 When God taught his people to worship him, he placed great emphasis on sacrifices. Why? Sacrifices were God's Old Testament way for people to ask forgiveness for their sins. Since Creation, God has made it clear that sin separates people from him, and that those who sin deserve to die. Because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), God designed sacrifice as a way to seek forgiveness and restore a relationship with him. Because he is a God of love and mercy, God decided from the very first that he would come into our world and die to pay the penalty for all humans. This he did in his Son, who, while still God, became a human being. In the meantime, before God made this ultimate sacrifice of his Son, he instructed people to kill animals as sacrifices for sin.

1:2-3 Animal sacrifice accomplished two purposes: (1) The animal symbolically took the sinner's place and paid the penalty for sin, and (2) the animal's death represented one life given so that another life could be saved. This method of sacrifice continued throughout Old Testament times. It was effective in teaching and guiding the people and bringing them back to God. But in New Testament times, Christ's death became the last sacrifice needed. He took our punishment once and for all. Animal sacrifice is no longer required. Now any person can be freed from the penalty of sin by simply believing in Jesus, acknowledging Jesus' sacrifice in his or her place, and accepting the forgiveness Jesus offers.

1:3-4 The first offering God describes is the burnt offering. A person who had sinned brought an animal with no defects to a priest. The unblemished animal symbolized the moral perfection demanded by a holy God and the perfect nature of the real sacrifice to come—Jesus Christ. The person then laid his hand on the head of the animal to symbolize the person's complete identification with the animal as his substitute. Then he killed the animal, and the priest sprinkled the blood. He symbolically transferred his sins to the animal, and thus his sins were taken away (atonement). Finally the animal (except for the blood and skin) was burned on the altar, signifying the person's complete dedication to God. God required more than a sacrifice, of course. He also asked the sinner to have an attitude of repentance. The outward symbol (the sacrifice) and the inner change (repentance) were to work together. But it is important to remember that neither sacrifice nor repentance actually caused the sin to be taken away. God alone forgives sin. Fortunately for us, forgiveness is part of God's loving nature. Have you responded to God's offer to forgive you?

1:4 Israel was not the only nation to sacrifice animals. Many other religions did it as well to try to please their gods. Some cultures even included human sacrifice, which was strictly forbidden by God. However, the meaning of Israel's animal sacrifices was clearly different from that of their pagan neighbors' sacrifices. The Israelites sacrificed animals, not just to appease God's wrath, but as a substitute for the punishment they deserved for their sins. A sacrifice showed faith in God and commitment to his laws. Most important, this system foreshadowed the day when the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) would die and conquer sin once and for all.

The procedure for offering a bull as a burnt offering - Verses 5-9

⁵ You are to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁶ You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. ⁷ The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. ⁹ You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

1:5-9 What did sacrifices teach the people? (1) By requiring perfect animals and holy priests, they taught reverence for a holy God. (2) By demanding exact obedience, they taught total submission to God's laws. (3) By requiring an animal of great value, they showed the high cost of sin and demonstrated the sincerity of the people's commitment to God. (4) By their nature, sacrifices required the use of all the senses in worship, encouraging a whole-person response to God. Some sacrifices were voluntary while others were required. The sacrificial system taught a combination of requirement before God, but also presented opportunities for heartfelt voluntary response to God.

The procedure for offering a sheep or a goat as a burnt offering - Verses 10-13

¹⁰ "If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male without defect. ¹¹ You are to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar. ¹² You are to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. ¹³ You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of them and burn them on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

1:10-13 Why are there such detailed regulations for each offering? God had a purpose in giving these commands. Starting from scratch, he was teaching his people a whole new way of life, cleansing them from the many pagan practices they had learned in Egypt, and restoring true worship of himself. The strict details kept Israel from slipping back into their old lifestyle. In addition, each law paints a graphic picture of the seriousness of sin and of God's great mercy in forgiving sinners.

1:13 The "aroma pleasing to the LORD" - This sacrifice, done the way God commanded, was pleasing to Him. It demonstrated the awareness of sin, the need for a substitute, the need for total dedication to God, and was a look forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ to come. That ultimate sacrifice would be perfectly sweet and pleasing to God, and therefore be offered once-for-all.

The procedure for offering a bird as a burnt offering - Verses 14-17

¹⁴ "If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you are to offer a dove or a young pigeon. ¹⁵ The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He is to remove the crop and the feathers and throw them down east of the altar where the ashes are. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by the wings, not dividing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is burning on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

1:14-17 God would not accept any kind of bird, but He would accept turtledoves or young pigeons as sacrifices. The fact that God would accept a bull, a goat, a sheep, or a bird shows that God was more interested in the heart behind the sacrifice than in the actual animal being offered. If the sacrifice was made with the right heart, God accepted the poor man's bird as much as the rich man's bull; the simple sacrifice of a poor man could still be a sweet aroma to the LORD.

1:14-17 The sacrifice had to correspond with what one could afford. It was wrong for a rich man to only offer a bird as a burnt offering. The greatness of the sacrifice had to correspond with the greatness of the one who brought the offering. Therefore, when God made His offering for sin, He gave the richest, most costly thing He could-Himself.