

Lesson 5

LEVITICUS

Have you ever resolved to read the Bible all the way through and then scrapped that plan in Leviticus? If so, you're not alone. It's a tough book to read, mainly because it's so _____ [a]. It's like trying to read the phone book. The first two books of the Bible—Genesis and Exodus—are full of exciting stories and edge-of-your-seat drama; but in Leviticus there's almost no stories at all. It's just a bunch of laws. *But*, boring as it may be to us, Leviticus is a very important book as God unfolds his plan of redemption.

It's important to recognize that the book of Leviticus grows out of the book of Exodus. In the second half of Exodus the tabernacle is built. That's where God chose to "live" among his people. So, the book of Exodus talks about _____ [b] approach to mankind. The book of Leviticus, on the other hand, talks about _____ [c] approach to God. Here's another way to think about it: the book of Exodus is about how God _____ [d] Israel, and the book of Leviticus is about how Israel must _____ [e] to God for setting them free.

We need both books and their complementary messages. Leviticus may not be as exciting as Exodus, but it shows that God _____ [f] something from those with whom he is in a _____ [g]. And what does God expect of his people? Basically, he expects two things: (1) acceptable _____ [h], and (2) acceptable _____ [i]. In a nutshell, then, the book of Leviticus is filled with laws/rules/instructions on how Israel is to worship God acceptably, and how they are to live morally and socially. Here's a quick summary of those laws.

LAWS OF ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP (Lev 1-16)

Keep in mind the tragedy of Exodus 32-34 (the golden calf episode). It reminds us that human beings are sinners and that a just and holy God cannot tolerate sin. So, it seems logical that Leviticus would open with God telling his people how their sins can be forgiven, and how they can commune with him and worship him acceptably. These laws on worship deal with _____ [j], the _____ [k], and _____ [l].

Laws pertaining to sacrifices (Lev 1-7). God directs Moses to give Israel instructions on how to offer five different types of sacrifices.

Some of these sacrifices were to atone for sin. When the people faithfully _____ [m] God's instructions for offering these sacrifices, it resulted in the blessing of _____ [n] (*NOTE: sacrifices offered without faith, repentance, and humility are not sacrifices offered in obedience*). Other sacrifices were offerings of _____ [o]. That is, some sacrifices were offered to say "thank you" to God for his blessings.

Laws pertaining to the priesthood (Lev 8-10). Up to this point, individuals like Abraham offered personal sacrifices to God. But now Aaron (the high priest and Moses' brother) and his sons and their descendants are chosen by God to take on the important role of offering the sacrifices for the people. Actually, though, the _____ [p] is not sacrificing for the _____ [q]; instead, he is assisting the worshiper in sacrificing. His role is to help worshipers by teaching them the _____ [r] of God and teaching them how to _____ [s] those commands. In this way, the priest " _____ [t]" the presence of God.

Laws pertaining to cleanliness (Lev 11-16). As a special nation, it was important for Israel to understand the difference between " _____ [u]" (or "clean") and " _____ [v]" (or "unclean"). Of all the laws of Moses, these may be the most baffling to modern readers. God reveals that various, everyday issues of life (such as food, animals, childbirth, disease, clothes, and bodily functions) can make them unclean, which basically means ceremonially impure. Being unclean is not a permanent condition, but only by sacrifice can the unclean be made clean again. God gives no real explanations or reasons for His instruction. He merely states that these are his standards and that the people are to obey him.

LAWS OF ACCEPTABLE LIVING (Lev 17-27)

Not only does God give Israel extensive instructions for how they are to approach and worship him, but he also gives them extensive instructions on how they are to _____ [w]. So, how are they to live? In a word, _____ [x]. Why? Because God is holy (Lev 19:1-2). Since God is holy, anyone who wants to have a relationship with him must live holy lives too. That means God's people must _____ [y] his _____ [z] in their behavior. The commands in these chapters touch every significant area of life. No part of their lives escape God's call to _____ [aa] (sexuality, relationships, business practices). God imposes a complete pattern of _____ [bb] and _____ [cc] behavior on his people.

TWO SPECIAL DAYS TO REMEMBER: THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND THE SABBATH DAY

The Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16 is the heart of the book's teaching. That's where God establishes "the Day of Atonement" (what is still commonly called Yom Kippur). This is the clearest picture in the Old Testament of God's _____ [dd] and of human _____ [ee] in that grace. In this single ceremony everything comes together—God's holiness, his mercy, Israel's special status as his elect people, the need for forgiveness, the need for purity, confession of sin, and sacrifice.

On that day—which took place only once a year—two goats are used to symbolize the sins of the people. One is sacrificed and its blood is sprinkled on the cover of the _____ [ff] of the _____ [gg]. The high priest then lays his hands on the live goat and confesses the sins of the people. The goat is then taken it into the desert (where it would presumably die with all their sins loaded on it). This goat is called the "_____ [hh]," a word we still use today. After this ceremony, total atonement has been achieved. God's _____ [ii] has been turned away. No condemnation or _____ [jj] remains. God's grace has overcome the people's sin and guilt. The joy of being _____ [kk] to God emerges.

The Sabbath Day. The sabbath is a week-by-week reminder that the holy people serve a holy God (Lev 23:3). In Genesis 2:2 God revealed that he created everything in six days and "rested on the seventh day." We then learn in Exodus 20:8-11 that God chose his creation pattern to ultimately establish a pattern for Israel to follow.

Ceasing labor each week would remind the Israelites that they are no longer slaves to the Egyptians, or slaves to their own work. Resting also allows them to stay in communion with God. For their faith to grow, they must truly believe that life does not consist simply of _____ [ll], _____ [mm], _____ [nn], _____ [oo], and appetite. They must find their greatest fulfillment in being God's holy people.

THE LESSONS OF LEVITICUS

- God is _____ [pp]. The holiness of God is repeatedly emphasized in Leviticus (Lev 10:1-3; 19:1-2). God's emotional reaction to sin comes because he is holy. God hates sin because he is holy.
- Mankind is _____ [qq]. Sin affects every category of human being—the rich, the poor, the priest, the "layperson." All

transgress God's will.

- Sin (the transgression of God's will) _____ [rr] us from God. Since God is holy and we are sinners, sin prevents us from fellowship with God.
- The solution to sin is _____ [ss]. God must pour out his holy wrath on sin. For there to be forgiveness, there must be death.
- Obeying God is _____ [tt]. Obedience has always demonstrated trust and faith in God. Those who trust God will obey him. Those who walk by faith will walk in obedience to the best of their ability.
- God reveals what _____ [uu] him. The only way we can know what pleases God is for him to tell us. The Israelites had very little knowledge of how to worship and live for God. They had lived in a land filled with many pagan gods and their sense of morality was sadly distorted (as witnessed at the "golden calf episode").
- God blesses _____ [vv] (Lev 26:3-13). God wants to bless, but his blessing is tied to loyalty. It's tied to faithfulness.
- The _____ [ww] system looks forward to Jesus. Hebrews 9:1-15 makes the most extensive use of the Day of Atonement in Scripture. So, the Day of Atonement presented a picture of a greater sacrifice still to come which would bring permanent forgiveness.
- God is in charge of your _____ [xx] life, and he demands holy living. As said earlier, since God is holy, anyone who wants to have a relationship with him must emulate his character in their behavior. God imposes a complete pattern of moral and social behavior on his people.
- God is in charge of _____ [yy], and there are _____ [zz] and unacceptable ways to worship. If God let his people to direct worship, we'd quickly put ourselves at the center of worship and be dancing around a golden calf.

KEY PASSAGES IN EXODUS

1. Lev 10:1-3
2. Lev 16 (Day of Atonement)
3. Lev 19:1-2
4. Lev 26 (blessings of obedience and consequences of disobedience)

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY:

[a] boring
[b] God's
[c] man's
[d] saves
[e] respond
[f] expects
[g] relationship
[h] worship
[i] living
[j] sacrifices
[k] priesthood
[l] cleanliness
[m] obeyed
[n] forgiveness
[o] gratitude
[p] priest
[q] worshiper
[r] commands
[s] obey
[t] mediates
[u] holy
[v] common
[w] live
[x] holy
[y] emulate
[z] character
[aa] holiness
[bb] moral
[cc] social
[dd] grace
[ee] faith
[ff] Ark
[gg] Covenant
[hh] scapegoat
[ii] wrath
[jj] guilt
[kk] reconciled
[ll] work
[mm] money
[nn] power
[oo] success
[pp] holy
[qq] sinful

[rr] separates
[ss] costly
[tt] mandatory
[uu] pleases
[vv] faithfulness
[ww] sacrificial
[xx] personal
[yy] worship
[zz] acceptable