

Date : 18 June 2023
Theme : Walking in Holiness
Topic : Worshipping a Holy God
Key passage : Leviticus 1-7
Key verse : Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. (Leviticus 19:2 NIV)

Introduction

One of the most important questions in life is "How may an unholy people approach a holy God? Leviticus is God's manual for His people on how to live in covenantal relationship with Him, how to worship, serve and obey a Holy God. It is a book where God calls His people, "I want you to be holy because I am Holy." (Lev 19:2) It outlines a system of sacrifices and atonement and shows God's desire to restore all people to live with Him. Every detail takes us back to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus who opened up the way to relate to a Holy God permanently.

I. Background of Leviticus

- When?
 - God gave the law after their deliverance from slavery.
- Where?
 - When Israel was camped at Mount Sinai.
- Duration?
 - About 1 month, starting from "So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year" (Ex 40:17) to "The Lord spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt." (Num 1:1)

II. What do the 5 offerings/sacrifices represent? (Leviticus 1 to 7)

Leviticus explains that the 5 sacrifices address sin and enable us to understand why Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is for our salvation.

The first 3 offerings have to do with communion with God, offered as acts of worship. They are sweet-savour aroma offering and are voluntary sacrifice – by bringing these sacrifices voluntarily, the Israelites showed their desire to live in fellowship with God.

1) Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)

- What?
 - Select the sacrifice from the herd or flock or turtledove or young pigeon, male animal without defect.
- How?
 - Offerer lays hands on the sacrifice to kill, skin and gives to the priest.
 - The priest would sprinkle the blood on the sides of the altar and burn everything on the altar except the skin, in the compound of the tabernacle.
- Why?
 - Sacrifice of general atonement due to man's sinful nature and the need to restore relationship with God.
 - Recognize sovereignty of God and total surrender and dedication to God's will.
- How is Christ foreshadowed?

- Jesus Christ, who is without defect and sinless, surrendered Himself totally to the Father's will.
- On the cross, Christ offered himself up completely and was totally consumed but His sacrifice was pleasing to the Father. (*Phil 2:8 - He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*)
- Our response?
 - Jesus was atoned for my sins. I am restored to relationship with God.
 - To give myself humbly to God, with a complete surrender, yielding to His will as a living sacrifice. (*Rom 12:1*)

2) Grain/Meal Offering (Leviticus 2)

- What?
 - Fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense and salt, with no yeast or honey.
- How?
 - Offerer brings to the priest who would burn a handful as memorial portion on the altar.
 - The priest would season the offering with salt.
- Why?
 - Acknowledge dependence and thank God for providing their daily needs.
- How is Christ foreshadowed?
 - Jesus Christ, the perfect humanity, was anointed with the Holy Spirit and offered up His body on the cross as a perfect fragrance to God.
- Our response?
 - Jesus offered Himself and was eternally pleasing to God. God's wrath is turned away from me.
 - Show gratitude to God by offering our best service and good works to God.

3) Fellowship/Peace Offering (Leviticus 3)

- What?
 - Select the sacrifice from the herd or flock, male or female animal without defect.
- How?
 - Offerer lays hands on the sacrifice to kill, take out fat and kidneys portion and gives to the priest.
 - The priest would sprinkle the blood on the sides of the altar and burn the portion of sacrifice on the altar.
- Why?
 - Restored communion with God by making peace through the offering.
 - In this offering, all three participants (God, priest, offerer) shared the food offered and it symbolized fellowship.
- How is Christ foreshadowed?
 - Jesus became our Peacemaker by offering His life for our sins, thus making reconciliation between God and man possible. (*Eph 2:14 – For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility*)
- Our response?
 - Jesus came to restore all things. I now have peace with God.
 - The believers can enjoy the communion with God because of Christ's work on the cross and His blood shed for our sins. We are at peace with God through the work of Christ.
 - Strive to be peacemakers and be at peace with God and others.

The next 2 offerings have to do with cleansing from God. They are non-sweet savour aroma offering and are mandatory sacrifice – to be made as a consequence to a certain kind of offense.

4) Sin Offering (Leviticus 4)

- What?
 - Different offerings for different roles – the high priest, the entire congregation, a leader, and a common person.
 - The high priest and the congregation required the most costly offering – a bull without defect, a leader required a male goat without defect, while the common person required the least costly – a female goat or lamb without defect.
- How?
 - Offerer lays hands on the sacrifice to kill, take out fat and kidneys portion and gives to the priest.
 - The whole bullock being burnt on the ground outside the camp of Israel after the blood and fat were put upon the altar for God.
- Why?
 - Atonement for unintentional sins only.
 - The sin offering was for violation of God's commandments for those who
 - (a) committed a sin without realizing it or
 - (b) committed a sin out of weakness or negligence as opposed to outright rebellion against God.
 - The sacrificial blood is used to cleanse the furniture in the tabernacle, signifying sin pollutes God's house and sprinkled on the veil because sin blemishes the sanctuary.
- How is Christ foreshadowed?
 - Jesus Christ was made sin for us and endured God's wrath and judgement as our Substitute. The holiness of God and the awfulness of sin are brought out in the bullock being burnt outside the camp.
 - Christ was forsaken by God, as our sin-bearer, suffered outside the camp to sanctify the people through His own blood. (*Heb 13:12 – And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.*)
- Our response?
 - I have a substitute Lamb for my sin.
 - To seek God's forgiveness as we recognize the effects of our sins on ourselves and others in the covenantal relationship.

5) Guilt/Trespass Offering (Leviticus 5)

- What?
 - Select a ram without defect.
- How?
 - Depending on the situation, like sin offering.
- Why?
 - Here sin is looked at as a trespass against God's government. This shows sin and its effects on God and man.
 - Not just the sin, but the damage sin does to others. It is viewed as a debt, something to be repaid.
 - Restitution had to be made for any wrong committed against God or against one's neighbour, along with an additional 20% for reparation, restoring what sin took away. (*Story of Zacchaeus who paid back fourfold of what he defrauded.*)
- How is Christ foreshadowed?
 - Jesus Christ died for our sins and trespasses on the cross restoring that which He did not take away. (*Psalms 69:4 – Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my*

head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.)

- He has not only answered to God for our sins and paid our debt by His shed blood but has added the additional 20%.
- Our response?
 - Jesus died for my trespasses. I am now restored to fellowship with God and God's people.
 - If our relationship with each other isn't right, then our relationship with God isn't right either. *(Matthew 5:23-24 – Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.)*
 - Sin often causes rifts between Christians, which means we must be in harmony with one another and repair that which has been broken.

III. How do we apply these principles in our covenantal relationship with a Holy God?

A. Approach a Holy God more reverently.

- God is the apex of holiness. He is utterly holy. God provides a means for our cleansing and to make us holy.
- We can only approach God on His terms.

B. Take sin more seriously.

- Sin separates us from God and from one another.
- Sacrificial blood is necessary to cleanse and sanctify.
- Through the sacrifice, the Israelites were constantly reminded not only of God's grace but also justice and the consequences of sin in our covenantal relationship.

C. Love Jesus more passionately.

- We can only maintain a relationship with God through Jesus' sacrifice by which we can be forgiven and to live holy lives before Him.

Reflection

How do we approach of God, especially knowing that He is a Holy God? Whether we approach God with fear, reverence, or carelessness depends on how exactly we view God's holiness.

Do:

- 1) Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal areas in your life that do not show holiness in our daily life.
 - Abstain from sin
 - Marketplace conduct
 - Practise being holy in music, shows, jokes
- 2) Re-dedicate yourself to be holy and give thanks to God for the privilege of worship mediated by your perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ!