

LEVITICUS

If we're honest, Leviticus is where most of us start losing interest or understanding. It may even feel outdated and unapproachable to our modern-day practices. In addition, with the New Testament essentially making most of the practices in Leviticus no longer necessary because of grace, many might wonder what value it holds today.

Yes, Leviticus is a book of religious practices and priestly commands but that doesn't mean it has no value for your life. There is an overarching theme of God's righteousness and if we pay attention, we can learn about His character in these pages.

Leviticus was written by Moses at the foot of Mt. Sinai and picks up where Exodus ended. It addresses the responsibilities of the Levites (priests), practices that helped people connect with God, and taught people how to live a holy life.

You have to remember: Israel had just come out of the land of Egypt. For hundreds of years, the culture that they lived in worshipped many gods and a sort of watered-down version of true religion had become their norm. They were confused. God gave them in Leviticus a clear understanding of His will and desire for righteous living.

You will find in this book mostly a set of practices, feasts, and sacrifices as well as a framework for the priesthood. But what I want you to focus on—instead of the law—is the holy character of God. See in it your propensity to sin and need for atonement. The atonement for your sin has changed (Jesus instead of ritual) but the need for it has not.

ACCESS THROUGH WORSHIP (CH. 1-16)

The first 16 chapters of Leviticus have to do mostly with practices of worship that gave the people access to God. You will find regulations and commands for various offerings and the establishment of the priests. In addition, God outlines prescriptions for uncleanness, such as childbirth and disease.

LEVITICUS (CONT.)

Again, it's necessary to note that sin created a separation from God. A God who is pure and righteous; free from sin. In order to find atonement, these laws were given to the people. God wanted (and still wants) relationship with all of His people. Mankind created a gap in the garden when sin entered but God had a plan to restore. Jesus was and is that enduring atonement but before he came, God gave people these practices as a way to draw closer to Him. To purify them of their sin.

God is holy, but He has always had a plan and made a way for His children to access Him. Since most of these chapters deal with the different kinds of sacrifice, I want to give a quick breakdown of their differences:

1. Burnt Offering: to atone for sin in general and signify complete dedication to God.
2. Grain Offering: thanksgiving to God; it accompanied all burnt offerings.
3. Peace Offering: expressed peace with God and expressed gratitude for an unexpected blessing, a blessing tied to a vow, and without regard to a specific blessing.
4. Sin Offering: to atone for a sin committed unknowingly and when restitution was not possible.
5. Trespass Offering: to atone for a sin committed unknowingly and when restitution was possible.

A HOLY WALK (CH. 17-27)

The rest of the book details mandates for holiness. Essentially, how God wanted His people to walk a righteous life. There are details in there about sacrifice and food, proper sexual behavior, crime, neighborliness, festivals, the tabernacle, and the sabbatical. It was a roadmap to right and wrong; good and evil.

LEVITICUS (CONT.)

It's worth noting that again, these were all necessary because Christ had not yet made the ultimate sacrifice for sin. But when he came, most of these practices were no longer needed. To give you an idea of how he replaces Old Testament law, let's take a brief look at the festivals outlined in this book and how Christ replaced the need for them.

1. Passover → Death of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7)
2. Unleavened Bread → Sinlessness of Christ (1 Cor. 5:8)
3. Firstfruits → Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23)
4. Pentecost → Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 2:4)
5. Trumpets → Israel's Regathering by Christ (Matthew 24:31)
6. Atonement → Substitutionary Sacrifice by Christ (Romans 11:26)
7. Tabernacles → Reunion with Christ (Zechariah 14:16-19)

Leviticus served a valuable but temporary need to point people to righteous living and access to a holy God.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

God is holy and righteous; none are like Him. And although our decision to sin created a gap, God provided a way to overcome that gap. In Leviticus, He gave mankind a list of works to atone for their sin. God loves His people and desires relationship and community with His children. So, he provided a way we could be made right through a mediator. Something we have always needed, with Jesus being the ultimate mediator.

MEMORY VERSE

"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Leviticus 19:2