



UNPACKING

LEVITICUS

Walter cates 5/13/24

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The Hebrew word ‘Leviticus’ translates to ‘About the Levites.’ Prior to that naming, it was referred to as, ‘The Priest’s Manual.’ Neither of these titles truly portrays the book’s true content and intent. The instructions, definitions and guidelines in this book were for all Jews. They are also important to Christians today, there is a connection between the **Law of Moses** and the **Grace of Christ**. To fully understand why Jesus came to earth as a fully human being, lived the way He did, died the way He did, and rose from the dead, we must understand the kind of relationship God wanted to have with the mankind He created.

In all the pagan religions at the time of Moses, only the priests were set apart to serve their gods. But the one true God and Creator of all things, set apart a whole nation. “You will be my holy nation and serve me as priests” (Exodus 19:6).

With careful reading of Leviticus, you will gain insight into what God wanted from his relationship with mankind, what was pleasing to Him and what offended Him. More important, you will see that God offers cleansing and repentance for our iniquities.

When reading Leviticus, try not to seek an understanding of the Jewish religion, but try to focus on the relationship God wanted with his people.

Mankind sins! Fact. So, if the Jews sinned how could they get back in favor with God. Sacrifices or “offerings” were the vehicle of repentance. The Jews were an agrarian culture. What they valued was their flocks, herds, and harvest. For the atonement of their transgressions God required the sacrifice of what they valued most. God was trying to impress upon them that their relationship with Him was more important than all their earthly wealth.

The book of Leviticus is not all religious instruction, so let us break it down chapter by chapter.

Chapters 1 through 7 are concerned with OFFERINGS. Chapters 1 through 5 deal with how to perform the offerings. Chapters 6 and 7 offer guidance on when the offerings are to be made and how they are dealt with.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 present a little history of the beginnings of the priesthood. First is the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests. That is followed by a narrative of the priest's ministry. Chapter 10 ends with the sad story of what happens when you do not follow the laws of God.

Try to picture the mass of people at the foot of Mt Sinai. There is a conglomeration of Jews and Egyptians (most of whom were slaves from all over the world). There was no common culture, no ordered society. Part of the purpose of Leviticus was to order that society. In chapters 11 through 15 God even covers health and hygiene issues.

Chapter 16 defines the day of Atonement.

Chapter 17 ties back to chapter 7 and eating blood.

Chapter 18 defines unlawful sexual relations.

Chapter 19 is the laws that did not fit any other categories.

Chapter 20 outlines the punishment for very heinous sins. Most of these offences resulted in death or cutting off from community and family.

21 and 22 provide rules and instructions for priests.

All the feasts, Passover and the Sabbath are detailed in chapter 23.

Chapter 25 explains the sabbath year and the year of jubilee.

Chapter 26 needs its own special note. This chapter deals with the rewards for obedience and the punishments for disobedience. It is interesting that the rewards section is covered in 13 verses and the punishment section needs 32 verses.

The last chapter instructs on redeeming what is the Lords.

I hope that by unpacking Leviticus you can see the connection between the Law of Moses and the Grace of Christ Jesus.

