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A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

SHARING THE SACRIFICE MEALS (6:1–7:38)

The Place of the Passage

The ultimate goal of forgiveness of sins is to restore communion with God. The goal of atonement is fellowship between God (the host), the priest (who accomplishes our atonement), and the people (whose sins are purged by the atonement). Leviticus emphasizes this lesson by including with the rules about sacrifices a separate section describing the ritual meal accompanying each sacrifice. In the modern West, mealtime rarely has the same significance it did in biblical times. It is easy, therefore, to overlook the importance of this ritual meal in God's house as the culmination of the sacrifice. Having already discussed the sacrifice procedures for all five categories of offering (1:1–6:7), Leviticus revisits all five offerings again, this time with particular focus on how the resulting fellowship meals were to be eaten in the Lord's house (6:8–7:38).

The Big Picture

The people of Israel are able to enter God's presence because of the thorough system of atonement he put in place.

Gospel Glimpses

HEAVENLY HOST. Mealtime does not have the same significance in the modern West as in many other cultures. A meal in America is typically a pragmatic affair, sometimes as shallow as wolfing down a burger and fries in a room crowded with a dozen complete strangers. Mealtime had much greater significance in an ancient Near Eastern society like Israel. To host someone in your home, feeding them at your table, was a gesture of honor. The Old Testament temple was set up not simply as an auditorium to listen to sermons and to sing but as a divine palace where the heavenly King hosted his people for feasting. Visits to the temple for sacrifice festivals were only occasional, but they represented the hope of one day dwelling forever in the presence of God (Exodus 25:40; Psalm 23:6; Hebrews 4:8–9; 10:1, 19–25; 12:22–24).

MEDIATOR. The Old Testament priests were imperfect individuals, requiring sacrifices for their own forgiveness before they could present sacrifices for the people (Hebrews 5:1–4). Nevertheless, their presence taught the people that it was impossible to accomplish atonement for themselves; a priestly office, wholly devoted to intercession on behalf of the people, was necessary. The ideal described in these rituals was fulfilled when the sinless Mediator appeared who was able to serve as both our High Priest and our Sacrifice (Hebrews 5:5–10).

Whole Bible Connections

COMMUNION. The peace offering involved five steps: presentation of a spotless offering (Leviticus 3:1, 6); laying hands on the sacrifice (3:2, 7–8, 13); slaughter (3:2, 8, 13); offering a portion to God (3:3–5, 9–11, 14–16); and eating a portion in God’s house (7:11–36). In the New Testament, Jesus sat with his disciples at a peace offering meal (Luke 22:7–23) and revealed that he is the true sacrifice who provides for our communion at the Lord’s Table. Therefore, Jesus instructed his disciples to eat a simplified peace offering meal “in remembrance of me.” Now, instead of bringing an animal sacrifice, Christians approach the communion table by remembering Christ with repentance in his name (I Corinthians 11:17–34).

Theological Soundings

SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT. Each time an animal sacrifice was brought to the altar, the offerer would “lay his hand on [its] head . . . and it [was] accepted for him” (Leviticus 1:4; also, 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33). The ritual act of pressing one’s hand on the head of the offering was an act of transfer, identifying the animal as a substitute to take the presenter’s place in the ritual to follow. This action was often accompanied with a verbal confession of sins over the animal (16:21). These Old Testament ritual acts provide the backdrop for the reality that the sinless Christ became a substitute for sinner.

Glossary of Terms

PRIEST

In OT Israel, the priest represented the people before God, and God before the people. Only those descended from Aaron could be priests. Their prescribed duties also included inspecting and receiving sacrifices from the people and overseeing the daily activities and maintenance of the tabernacle or temple.

Please answer the following questions:

Leviticus Chapter 6

1. Besides the guilt offering what was a man to do who had deceived his neighbor? (6:4-5)
2. Where was the grain offering to be eaten? (6:16)
3. The grain offering is holy like what other offerings? (6:17)
4. Who could eat the priests' portion? (6:18)
5. What happened to whatever touched this? (6:18)
6. What was the grain offering of Aaron and his sons? (6:20-21)
7. How was it prepared? (6:21)
8. Who was to prepare this offering? (6:22)
9. How did this differ from the other grain offerings? (6:22-23)
10. Who was to eat the sin offering? (6:26)

11. What happened if the blood of the sin offering splattered on a garment? (6:27)
12. What were the regulations concerning the pots in which the meat was cooked? (6:28)
13. The meat of what sin offerings could not be eaten? (6:30)

Leviticus Chapter 7

1. Where was the blood of the guilt (trespass) offering put? (7:2)
2. What part of the offering was burned? (7:3)
3. Who could eat the meat of the guilt offering? (7:6)
4. What could the priest who offered a burnt offering keep? (7:7-8)
5. Which grain offering belonged to the priest who offered it? (7:9)
6. Which belonged equally to all the sons of Aaron? (7:10)

7. If the fellowship offering was offered as an expression of thankfulness, what was to be offered with it? (7:12-13)

8. To whom does this belong? (7:14)

9. How soon must it be eaten? (7:15)

10. What if the offering is a result of a vow or freewill offering? (7:16)

11. What was to happen to meat left from fellowship offerings until the 3rd day? (7:17)

12. What happened if it was eaten on the 3rd day? (7:18)

13. What was to be done to meat that touched something ceremonially unclean? (7:19)

14. Who could eat the other meat? (7:19)

15. What happened to anyone who ate who was ceremonially unclean? (7:20)

16. What could the Israelites not eat according to Leviticus 7:23-26? (7:23-26)

17. What was this fat set aside to be used for? (7:25)

18. What would happen if you did eat fat or blood? (7:25-27)

19. What part of the fellowship offering became the wave offering? (7:30)

20. What parts of offerings made by fire did the priest receive? (7:31-32)

21. Who was to receive the right thigh? (7:33)

22. On what day was it decided what part belonged to the priests? How long? (7:36)