

# ***Second Baptist Church of Doylestown***

## ***Bible Study Notes***

***1-27-21***

### ***Overview Book of Leviticus***

"GOD seems so far away . . . if only I could see or hear him." Have you ever felt this way—struggling with loneliness, burdened by despair, riddled with sin, overwhelmed by problems? Made in God's image, we were created to have a close relationship with him; thus, when fellowship is broken, we are incomplete and need restoration. Communion with the living God is the essence of worship. It is vital, touching the very core of our lives. Perhaps this is why a whole book of the Bible is dedicated to worship. After Israel's dramatic exit from Egypt, the nation was camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for two years to listen to God (Exodus 19 to Numbers 10). It was a time of resting, teaching, building, and meeting with him face to face. Redemption in Exodus is the foundation for cleansing, worship, and service in Leviticus.

The overwhelming message of Leviticus is the holiness of God—"Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (19:2). But how can unholy people approach a holy God? The answer—first sin must be dealt with. Thus the opening chapters of Leviticus give detailed instructions for offering sacrifices, which were the active symbols of repentance and obedience. Whether bulls, grain, goats, or sheep, the sacrificial offerings had to be perfect, with no defects or bruises—pictures of the ultimate sacrifice to come, Jesus, the Lamb of God. Jesus has come and opened the way to God by giving up his life as the final sacrifice in our place. True worship and oneness with God begin as we confess our sin and accept Christ as the only one who can redeem us from sin and help us approach God.

In Leviticus, sacrifices, priests, and the sacred Day of Atonement opened the way for the Israelites to come to God. God's people were also to worship him with their lives. Thus we read of purity laws (chapters 11-15) and rules for daily living, concerning family responsibilities, sexual conduct, relationships, worldliness (chapters 18-20), and vows (chapter 27). These instructions involve one's holy walk with God, and the patterns of spiritual living still apply today. Worship, therefore, has a horizontal aspect—that is, God is honored by our lives as we relate to others.

The final emphasis in Leviticus is celebration. The book gives instructions for Israel's festivals. These were special, regular, and corporate occasions for remembering what God had done, giving thanks to him, and rededicating lives to his service (chapter 23). Our Christian traditions and holidays are different, but they are necessary ingredients of worship. We, too, need special days of worship and celebration with our spiritual brothers and sisters to remember God's goodness in our lives.

As you read Leviticus, rededicate yourself to holiness, worshipping God in private confession, public service, and group celebration.

#### **VITAL STATISTICS**

**PURPOSE:** A handbook for the priests and Levites outlining their duties in worship, and a guidebook of holy living for the Hebrews

**AUTHOR:** Moses

**ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:** The people of Israel

**DATE WRITTEN:** 1450-1410 B.C.

**WHERE WRITTEN:** In the wilderness during Israel's wanderings, somewhere in the Sinai peninsula

**SETTING:** At the foot of Mount Sinai. God is teaching the Israelites how to live as holy people.

**KEY VERSE:** "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (19:2).

**KEY PEOPLE:** Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar

**KEY PLACE:** Mount Sinai

**SPECIAL FEATURE:** Holiness is mentioned more times (152) than in any other book of the Bible.

## **THE BLUEPRINT**

### **A. WORSHIPING A HOLY GOD (1:1-17:16)**

1. Instructions for the offerings
2. Instructions for the priests
3. Instructions for the people
4. Instructions for the altar

God provided specific directions for the kind of worship that would be pleasing to him. These instructions teach us about the nature of God and can help us develop a right attitude toward worship. Through the offerings we learn of the seriousness of sin and the importance of bringing our sins to God for forgiveness.

### **B. LIVING A HOLY LIFE (18:1-27:34)**

1. Standards for the people
2. Rules for priests
3. Seasons and festivals
4. Receiving God's blessing

God gave clear standards to the Israelites for living a holy life. They were to be separate and distinct from the pagan nations around them. In the same way, all believers should be separated from sin and dedicated to God. God still wants to remove sin from the lives of his people.

## **MEGATHEMES**

### **Sacrifice/Offering**

**EXPLANATION:** There are five kinds of offerings that fulfill two main purposes: one to show praise, thankfulness, and devotion; the other for atonement, the covering and removal of guilt and sin. Animal

offerings demonstrated that the person was giving his or her life to God by means of the life of the animal.

**IMPORTANCE:** The sacrifices (offerings) were for worship and forgiveness of sin. Through them we learn about the cost of sin, for we see that we cannot forgive ourselves. God's system says that a life must be given for a life. In the Old Testament, an animal's life was given to save the life of a person. But this was only a temporary measure until Jesus' death paid the penalty of sin for all people forever.

## **Worship**

**EXPLANATION:** Seven festivals were designated as religious and national holidays. They were often celebrated in family settings. These events teach us much about worshiping God in both celebration and quiet dedication.

**IMPORTANCE:** God's rules about worship set up an orderly, regular pattern of fellowship with him. They allowed times for celebration and thanksgiving as well as for reverence and rededication. Our worship should demonstrate our deep devotion.

## **Health**

**EXPLANATION:** Civil rules for handling food, disease, and sex were taught. In these physical principles, many spiritual principles were suggested. Israel was to be different from the surrounding nations. God was preserving Israel from disease and community health problems.

**IMPORTANCE:** We are to be different morally and spiritually from the unbelievers around us. Principles for healthy living are as important today as in Moses' time. A healthy environment and a healthy body make our service to God more effective.

## **Holiness**

**EXPLANATION:** Holy means "separated" or "devoted." God removed his people from Egypt; now he was removing Egypt from the people. He was showing them how to exchange Egyptian ways of living and thinking for his ways.

**IMPORTANCE:** We must devote every area of life to God. God desires absolute obedience in motives as well as practices. Though we do not observe all the worship practices of Israel, we are to have the same spirit of preparation and devotion.

## **Levites**

**EXPLANATION:** The Levites and priests instructed the people in their worship. They were the ministers of their day. They also regulated the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws and supervised the health, justice, and welfare of the nation.

**IMPORTANCE:** The Levites were servants who showed Israel the way to God. They provide the historical backdrop for Christ, who is our High Priest and yet our Servant. God's true servants care for all the needs of their people.