

## **Synthetic Bible Studies**

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible  
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and  
Bible Expositions

By

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### **LESSON SIX**

#### **LEVITICUS**

We have found a secondary name for each of the other books already studied, one which more plainly suggests to English readers the general character of its contents, and we may do the same for Leviticus. It might be called the book of the laws. Not law, but laws. The Book of the Law is a title frequently ascribed to the Pentateuch, but "*The book of the Laws*" well describes the third division of the Pentateuch, because it is a divine revelation of the laws which were to govern the priests chiefly, in their administration of the Tabernacle service, and their care of the people both materially and spiritually. Remember that the latter are still at Sinai, that Leviticus was given to Moses at that place, and that it is in its nature a supplement to, really a part of, the preceding book of Exodus.

Regarding it, therefore, as a book of laws, what is the first great fact, or law, it contains? No difficulty is experienced in answering, "*The law of the offerings.*"

How many chapters are taken up with the consideration of this law? 1-7 inclusive.

What is the law of the offerings? In other words, how many distinct kinds of offerings are enumerated? Five:

- Burnt,
- meat or meal,
- peace,

- sin,
- trespass.

You will observe that I have written the name of the second "meal," instead of meat, as being the more befitting the nature of the offering itself, which contains no meat in the sense of flesh as we now use that term.

### **The Significance of the Offerings**

Many offerings and sacrifices are referred to in the history of Israel, but it will simplify matters very much and save confusion, if we remember that they all fall under this law, they are always one of these five. It does not matter whether they are offered for the priest himself, the nation, a ruler of the nation, or a common person; it does not matter whether the offering is a bullock, a sheep, a goat, a turtle-dove or a pigeon, in any case it is one of these five.

In chapter 7, reference is made to offerings for vows, and thanksgiving, and voluntary offerings, but they are simply different aspects of the one trespass offering.

It must not be supposed, of course, that these offerings in themselves satisfied GOD (Hebrews 10:4). Their importance lay in what they symbolized, viz.: the person and the work of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

The careful study of the offerings will do more to exalt Him in our eyes, and teach us the real character of His vicarious life and death, than any other part of the Bible. C. H. M.'s *Notes on Leviticus* will afford help, and also *Mosaic Institutions*, by Moorehead, spoken of in a previous chapter. The best book, however, is entitled, *The Law of the Offerings*, by Andrew Jukes. It is small and inexpensive, but fuller than any of the others. A good volume, or commentary, on the whole book of Leviticus is found in the *Expositor's series*, written by the late Professor S. H. Kellogg, D.D.

These offerings do not represent in every case the same aspect of CHRIST's person and work, but different aspects.

- in the burnt and meal offerings we see His consecration,
- in the peace offering His communion and fellowship with GOD,
- in the sin and trespass offerings His atoning sacrifice.

In all these particulars, however, it is not CHRIST alone who is thus seen, but we (who are believers) in CHRIST. Nothing will strengthen our assurance of salvation, or melt our hearts in love toward Him, or awaken our adoration of His character and grace, like an understanding of our position in Him as set before us in this wonderful revelation.

### **The Second of the Laws**

After passing from the law of the offerings, what is the next great fact in Leviticus? The consecration of Aaron and his sons, chapters 8-10.

The law about this consecration was really given in Exodus as we saw, and in the present instance we have the first execution of that law; but to accommodate ourselves to the secondary name of the book, let us call it "*The law of consecration.*" It will be observed that the details of the consecration occupy chapters 8, 9, and are in accordance with the previous commands received. But when we reach chapter 10, whose content really belong to the present division of the book, an exception occurs.

To understand what follows in the death of Aaron's sons, notice carefully the last verse of chapter 9, which speaks of the sacrifice on the brazen altar in the outer court, and holy fire from the Lord consuming it. It was this fire, the same that consumed the sacrifice, that should have been employed in the censers to burn the incense before the Lord. Nadab and Abihu neglected this, and offered "**strange fire,**" and were instantly slain.

This looks like a terrible punishment for a slight offense. But the offense was not slight. It was a flagrant disobedience of a plain command, several commands, in short. Not only did they disobey in the matter of the fire (see 16:12), but also it would seem, in performing an office which belonged only to their father, the high priest, for, as some think, they went into the Holy of holies. Moreover, two went in where only one was permitted. Furthermore, the offense was committed at a very critical moment in the history of the people, at the very beginning of their covenant relationship to GOD.

It suggests a somewhat similar occurrence in the opening era of the Christian church (Acts 5:1, 2).

In both cases a signal manifestation of the divine displeasure was necessary for the sake of impressing the lesson upon the whole nation in the one case, and the whole church in the other.

It need not be supposed, however, that this punishment involved the eternal loss of the souls of these men. That question need not be raised in this connection at all. It was a case of GOD's judging in the midst of His people, not a case of His actings among "**them that are without.**"

It affords a solemn warning, however, to any within the visible church who would depart in their worship from the plain revelation of GOD, and to any without, who would seek to approach Him in some other way than the prescribed one. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

### **The Third of the Laws**

The next law will be found to include the contents of several chapters, 11-22 inclusive, omitting perhaps 16, which treats of a separate subject of much importance.

The name usually given to this law (11-22), is that of "**The clean and the unclean,**" and will be found to include such subjects as:

- the creatures that may, or may not, be eaten (11),
- the ceremonial purification of women (12),
- the detection and purification of leprosy (13, 14),
- personal uncleanness (15),

- the prohibition concerning blood (17),
- incestuous connections (18),
- purification of the priests (21, 22),

while chapters 19, 20 repeat certain laws given before, doubtless for the purpose of emphasizing them, and the specific punishments attached to them.

The three main subjects of the law may be characterized as follows:

1. Food;
2. Disease;
3. Personal habits.

Of course, one reason for the enunciation of these laws concerned the health and the morals of the people, and to this day, notwithstanding their imperfect obedience thereto, the Hebrews remain the healthiest and most moral of all races. But a broader reason points to the design of GOD to keep the nation separate from every other (20:25, 26).

This applies to all the laws of this book, and has a bearing on what was said in an earlier lesson as to GOD's purposes in calling Israel to be His special people. They were to be peculiar for the world's sake, as a source of blessing to the whole earth. Nor should it be overlooked that there is a deep spiritual and special significance to many, if not all, of these distinctions and prohibitions. Of those concerning leprosy is this particularly so. It is a striking representation of sin, and will well repay a careful study as the basis of a Bible reading on that subject.

Amid so many things to be specifically noticed, it is difficult to distinguish. But notice the allusion to these laws in Acts 10:11-16, and see how GOD raises the thoughts of the apostle, and through him the whole church, far above their Levitical application. See how he teaches that the true cleanness these things typified, was that accomplished through being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Notice that class of laws which brings out the thought of GOD's tenderness and care, 19:9, 10, compared with Ruth 2:14-16, also 19:13 compared with James 5:4.

What live topics these furnish for the times in which we live, and how they indicate that the Bible is the source of the true sociology as well as soteriology!

This is the book for the modern social and political reformers as well as the preacher.

Notice the teaching in chapters 21, 22 concerning the priestly position, which has such a practical bearing on the standing of believers in CHRIST in the light of the last lesson. The sons of Aaron were priests by birth, and nothing could break that relationship. There were many things which might interfere with the full enjoyment of their privileges, but the relationship remained.

The spiritually-minded student will easily see the application of this to the doctrine of assurance on the one hand, and the distinction between salvation and fellowship or communion on the other.

## The Fourth of the Laws

To return to chapter 16, What is its subject? Shall we identify it as "*The law of the Day of Atonement*"?

Observe when it was given (v. 1).

It seems to be recorded out of its due order, and yet there must have been some reason for it. Observe that this was the only occasion when the high priest entered the Holy of holies (v. 2).

- what change took place in his customary garments (v. 4)?
- were these simple garments more in accord with the character of the day as one of sorrow, penitence and humiliation, or since the offerings of that day were entirely expiatory did the garments better typify the holiness of Him who became our atonement?
- for whom did the high priest present a sin-offering as well as for the nation (v. 5)?
- what peculiar offering was presented for the people on this day (vv. 5-10)?
- what special act of the high priest conveyed the idea of the transfer of Israel's sin to the scape-goat (vv. 20-22)?
- at what time of the year did this day, (corresponding pretty nearly to the close of our September or beginning of October), come (vv. 29, 30)?

The chief features of this law might be thus specified:

- (1) Once a year.
- (2) Two goats.
- (3) Holy of holies.
- (4) Complete expiation.

Notice in regard to 4 that the design of the Day of Atonement was the putting away of all the sins of the people from the highest to the lowest, that they may have committed through the whole year. Incidental and occasional sin-offerings during the year, had, it may be, overlooked much of which the people were ignorant, but on this day there was a general clearing-up of everything so that nothing remained to be atoned for. Blessed be GOD for a Saviour thus typified, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin (I John 1:7).

Notice the word for scape-goat in some margins (Azazel), one which gives great difficulty to expositors. Some think that as the slain goat represented CHRIST satisfying divine justice by laying down His life, the scape-goat represented Him burdened with our sin, deserted by His Father for a season, and delivered for His "bruising" into the hand of the prince of darkness.

The goat led into the wilderness brings to mind Matthew 4:1.

Others ignoring the difficulty about Azazel, speak of the slain goat typifying CHRIST's death as glorifying GOD with respect to sin in general, vindicating His character and meeting all the claims of His law, even though no sinners were saved (Isaiah 49:1-3; John 12:27-31; 13:31, 32). While the scape-goat gives us the application of His death to the sins of the people. Where are

our sins who believe in CHRIST? GOD is glorified in putting them away forever through the sacrifice of His Son, "as far as the east is from the west."

Notice the distinction pertaining to the people of GOD under the Gospel as compared with the law, in Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:6-14, 24-26; 10:1-4, 19-22.

### The Fifth of the Laws

What is the theme of chapter 23? Read carefully, and write down the names of the various feasts:

- Sabbath, verse 3;
- Passover, verse 5;
- unleavened bread, verses 6-8;
- first-fruits, verses 9-14;
- Pentecost, verses 15-22;
- trumpets, verses 24, 25;
- Day of Atonement, verses 27-32;
- tabernacles, verses 33-44.

As the "**Day of Atonement**" was a fast rather than a feast, it is not enumerated in the above list, though its chronological place is indicated.

Notice that the Sabbath was always a holy convocation, suggesting that meetings for public worship are an essential feature of the observance of one rest day in seven.

Notice that the passover (1 day) immediately followed by the feast of unleavened bread (7 days), made a single feast of 8 days coming in the spring.

The first-fruits followed in early summer, the waving of the sheaf signifying the presentation to the Lord of the whole harvest as His, a beautiful type of CHRIST in the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:20).

The Pentecost, from a Greek word meaning *fifty*, was sometimes called "*the feast of weeks*" (Exodus 34:22), occurring as it did 7 weeks after the feast of unleavened bread, and "*the feast of harvest*" (Exodus 23:16), since it celebrated the ingathering in the autumn.

The feast of trumpets was really the New Year feast (about the last of September or first of October), reminding them that all their times were in GOD's hands; while that of the tabernacles following it so closely, and lasting 8 days, was to commemorate the wilderness journey and the dwelling in booths.

Notice, that some of these feasts must have been ordained only with reference to their observance in the land of Israel after the people had become settled in their national abode.

Notice also that they involved the gathering together of the people, at least the males, in some central place, and for the same object, at least three times a year, and while they were in the nature of joyous excursions, they also contributed to the maintenance of a spirit of fellowship,

patriotism and worship. Surely GOD is a wise Legislator, a benevolent Ruler, and a loving Father!

Notice that the typical and spiritual significance of these feasts must be very rich, though we can not dwell upon it.

One who has given particular thought to it speaks of the Passover, the first of the annual feasts, as typifying redemption, the Tabernacle, the last in the list, millennial glory, while between the two we have the resurrection of CHRIST in the first-fruits, the calling out of the church in the Pentecost, and the ultimate conversion and restoration of Israel in the trumpets, and Day of Atonement.

### **The Law of the Sabbatic Year**

The next great law is found in chapter 25, the name of which is at the head of this paragraph.

- how often did the Sabbatic year come (v. 4)?
- what was to rest in that year (v. 5)?
- What use might be made of the natural increase of that year (vv. 6, 7)?
- what provision was made for their support the following year (vv. 20-22)?

If it be asked what was the object of this law, two or three thoughts suggest themselves.

1. It would be a good thing for the land to lie fallow a year.
2. It would remind the people of GOD's ownership of everything, and their stewardship only.
3. It would also quicken their trust in and thanksgiving to GOD for His benefits.

It is well to observe, however, that the law was neglected and proved a contributing cause to their subsequent captivity in Babylon, see II Chronicles 36:21, in the light of the immediate context.

### **The Law of the Jubilee Year**

- How often did the Jubilee year come (v. 10)?
- How and when announced (v. 9)?
- Who and what was set free in that year? Individuals that had come into bondage and land that had been sold, verses 10, 13-17, 23-28, 39-42, 47-55.
- On what principle of equity were these transfers to be made (vv. 14-17, 25-27, 50-52)?
- On what ground were they to be jealous of oppressing one another (v. 17)?
- What reward promised to obedience (vv. 18, 19)?
- Why could not the land be sold out-right (v. 23)?
- What does this suggest as to the probable future return of Israel to that land (Isaiah 11:10-16; Jeremiah 32:36-42; Ezekiel 34:11-15)?
- What exceptions are made to the return of property in the Jubilee (vv. 29, 30, 32, 33)?

It has been suggested that this provision was made to encourage strangers to settle among them. They could not purchase land, but might purchase houses in walled cities as convenient for

purposes of trade, etc. What prohibition is laid in the matter of slavery (vv. 39-42)?

It is unnecessary to point out that the Jubilee must have been "the most soul-stirring and enrapturing" of all the Jewish solemnities. It was connected with the Day of Atonement and based upon what it effected. Redemptive joy comes through the shed blood of the great Substitute. The feast bore witness to the glad day spoken of for Israel by all the prophets.

### **The Types of CHRIST**

Leviticus is so full of precious suggestions of the person and work of CHRIST, that to enumerate them would be to repeat a large part of what has been said. But the three most conspicuous types are:

The offerings.  
The priesthood.  
The two goats.

~ end of Lesson 6 ~

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