

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Last week we learned how the book of LEVITICUS came into being, its character as divine revelation, its division into seven main parts and its main difference with the rituals of the other nations. Today we will learn about the main messages in the book of Leviticus.

POINT 4. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF LEVITICUS

First. Leviticus teaches the way how people in the Old Testament may approach, fellowship and worship the Lord.

The main goal and theme of Leviticus is regulating how God's redeemed people may approach, fellowship and worship God. All the ceremonial laws are intended to prevent Israel from worshipping God in the abominable ways of the pagan nations. The offerings are never brought to idols. Everybody in Israel was forbidden to follow the detestable practices of these nations. The religious festivals had to be free from the drunkenness, orgies and revelry of these nations. The theme of Leviticus may be described in terms of Psalm 29:2, "Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness." The Old Testament ceremonial laws prepared God's Old Testament people for the New Testament way of worshipping God. John 4:24 teaches that the New Testament way of worship is not outwardly ceremonial, but inwardly "in spirit and in truth".

Second. Leviticus teaches that only God himself determines the way of access, fellowship and worship.

The book of Genesis teaches clearly that people have failed under all favourable conditions. All people need God as their Saviour!

The book of Exodus teaches clearly that God saves people by his grace and mercy and not because people deserve it. People are saved only by God's grace! Since access to God is made possible by grace alone, the believer must maintain his access to God, fellowship with God and worship of God only in the specific way that God himself has commanded. People may not worship God in any way as they please, but must worship in the only way that God has prescribed.

The book of Leviticus regulates the way in which believers during the Old Testament period should have access to God, fellowship and worship God. Therefore all the regulations with regard to the offerings and other rituals must originate with God and not with man. All religious rituals that are invented by man should be regarded as an attempt to establish some kind of self-justifying personal merit before God. The Old Testament ceremonies prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. John 14:6 says that he would be the only way of uninhibited access to God.

Third. Leviticus teaches that the way of access to God is only on the basis of substitutionary atonement.

The God of the Bible is a holy and righteous God. He hates wickedness and unholiness. He will not associate with people who are wicked and unholy. Therefore he has commanded the way how people during the Old Testament period could maintain access to God. Israel as a community could maintain access to God only by offerings. By the shedding of the blood of a sacrifice, an innocent life was substituted for the forfeited life of the guilty person. The Old Testament ceremonies prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:12 says that by the shedding of his own blood Jesus Christ once for all obtained eternal redemption.

Fourth. Leviticus teaches that the offerings to God in the Old Testament must be perfect.

No lamb or goat that had any kind of defect may be offered to the Lord.

Nothing corrupt or liable to speedy decay may be presented as an offering to God. Therefore, leaven, honey and milk, which quickly caused decay, were excluded from the offerings to God. But salt, which preserves and gives taste, were added to the offerings to God (Lev 2:13). Leaven and honey, which was a kind of syrup produced from fruit and dates, quickly ferments, and milk quickly sours.

Animals like pigs were excluded, because in those days the pagan nations associated pigs with the worship of the gods of the nether world.

Nothing impure may enter the holy presence of God. People with infectious diseases or wearing contaminated clothing were excluded. Clothing made of a mixture of different materials, such as wool and flax, were excluded, because they typified the mingling of the holy and the profane. All these perfect offerings in the Old Testament were intended to teach the Israelites that God is satisfied with nothing less than what is perfect.

The Old Testament ceremonial laws prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:26,28 says that Jesus Christ is the only perfect human being who has ever lived. He “is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens, ... made perfect for ever!” Nothing but the perfect Jesus Christ could be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Fifth. Leviticus teaches that the purpose of fellowship and worship of God is love expressed in holiness.

In Leviticus 19:2 the Lord says to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.’” The word ‘*holy*’ means *to be set apart from* the sinful and rebellious world and *to be dedicated to* the worship and service of the one and only living God. God wants his own people to be like himself. God is holy and he wants his people to be holy.

How is holiness expressed? Holiness is especially shown in the way the people of God relate to God and to their family members, their neighbours and to the aliens living in their midst. In short, holiness is shown in loving God and the neighbour. In Leviticus 19:18 God says, “Love your neighbour as yourself!” Therefore the fundamental attitude of love is expressed in the following five ways of holiness:

One. Love is expressed in holiness when you abstain from sexual immorality.

In Leviticus chapter 18 and 20 we read that the people of God show their love in holiness when they abstain from every kind of sexual immorality and from anything that violates the marriage bond. Especially adultery, incest, homosexuality and bestiality are abominable to God. And God will certainly punish people who do these things.

In Leviticus 18:20 and 20:10 God says concerning *adultery*: “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbour’s wife and defile yourself with her. If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, ... both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”

In Leviticus 18:6 and 20:17 God says concerning *incest*: “No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. If a man ... has sexual relations with ... the daughter of either his father or his mother, it is a disgrace and they must be cut off before the eyes of their people.” In Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 God says concerning *homosexuality* “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them has done what is detestable. They must be put to death.”

In Leviticus 18:24 God warns: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.” The reason why God punished the Canaanite nations was because they committed these sexual immoral sins.

Two. Love is expressed in holiness when you are honest and incorruptable.

In Leviticus 19:11 and 16 God commands, “Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not go about spreading slander among your people.”

Three. Love is expressed in holiness when you are fair and just.

In Leviticus 19:13 and verse 35-36 God commands, “Do not defraud your neighbour or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights.” Unlike the common practice among the nations to cheat and bribe in business transactions, God commands his people to be different! God’s people should love their neighbour by never cheating and by never paying bribes or receiving bribes under any circumstances. In Leviticus 19:15 God commands, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism towards the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.” The same is commanded in Deuteronomy 16:19, “Do not pervert justice ... Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.” Unlike the common practice among the nations to influence decisions made in the court of justice by paying bribes to false witnesses and bribes to the judges, the people of God should love their neighbour by never perverting justice, by never showing favouritism to the rich and powerful and by never receiving or giving bribes!

Four. Love is expressed in holiness when you protect life.

In Leviticus 19:16 God commands, “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour’s life.” And in Leviticus 19:14 God commands, “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind.” Because the deaf cannot hear and the blind cannot see, the people of God should never do things that would prejudice the interests of the handicapped or in any way harm the handicapped. God’s people should especially be concerned with the needs of the handicapped, the aged, the widows and orphans, the poor and the oppressed.

Five. Love is expressed in holiness when you avoid every form of occultism.

In Leviticus 19:26 and 31 God commands, “Do not practice divination or sorcery. Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them.” And in Leviticus 20:6 and 27 God warns that he will punish both the people who practice occultism and the people who consult the occultists. He says, “I will set my face against the person who

turns to mediums and spiritists ... I will cut him off from his people. A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death." While modern man thinks that spiritism and other forms of occultism are harmless, God regards it as dangerous for man and detestable.

While in the Old Testament *love is especially expressed in holiness*, in the New Testament *love is especially expressed in obedience*. In John 14:21 and 23 Jesus Christ says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." In the New Testament, obedience includes holiness of life.

POINT 5. TWO PRINCIPLES IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

First. The principle of salvation for the total man.

The view of man's soul in Israel determined their view of sin and salvation. The view of many people in the modern world is based on neo-Platonic philosophy, which teaches that man is a duality: man "has a body and soul" and therefore can keep his physical and psychological functions apart. But the teaching of the Bible is different. According to Genesis 2:7, man does not "have a soul", but he "is a living soul"! "*Man is a soul*" that has two sides: a visible physical side and an invisible spiritual side! Man is therefore a unity and not a duality. That is why also the New Testament teaches that a person without spiritual life is a *dead* person.

This means that the invisible spiritual world influences not only his spiritual and psychological life, but also his physical life, like his health! The invisible spiritual world of God has influence on every aspect of man's life. It affects the total man! This also means that every aspect of man's life can get involved in sin. Sin affects a man's spiritual, psychological, intellectual, volitional and physical life. In order to teach these truths to his own people, God made laws not only with respect to the spiritual aspects of man's life, but also laws with respect to the physical aspects of man's life. Laws with respect to the spiritual aspects of man are for example the offerings. And laws with respect to the physical aspects of man are for example the prohibitions to eat unclean food or to touch unclean things.

Therefore, the ceremonial (ritual) aspect of Israel's life served to teach man that *every aspect of human life is important for God* and that *God has come to save the total man!* God has come to save man's spirit and man's body! Proverbs 11:30 says, "He who wins souls is wise". To win souls is to be concerned with both a person's spirit and a person's body.

Second. The principle of perfection.

Leviticus teaches that the number *seven is a sacred number*. Because God completed the created universe in seven days and rested from his work of creation on the seventh day, therefore the number seven symbolises *the perfect work of God*.

In the book of Leviticus, we often find the number seven. For example, the number seven occurs in the following. Every seventh day is the Sabbath, which is a day of rest for man from his daily work and an opportunity to have a sacred assembly together with other believers (Lev 23:3). Every seventh year is a Sabbath Year, which is a year of rest for the crop bearing fields. After every seven Sabbath Years, the fiftieth year is the Year of Jubilee, which is a year in which all the mortgaged lands must be returned to the original family. The Passover Festival is held at the end of the second sevens of days, that is, on the 14th day of the month Abib in the evening. The Festival of Unleavened Bread is celebrated during the seven days following the Passover. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost is celebrated seven weeks after bringing the sheaf of the wave offering, that is, on the fiftieth day. During the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, the month of Tishri, there are three important festivals: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is also celebrated for seven days.

God uses the number seven to remind man that whatever God does is *perfect* and whatever God requires is also nothing less than *perfect*.

However, Israel could not obey God perfectly and so God used the law to drive Israel to the coming Saviour Jesus Christ. In the New Testament in Galatians 3:23-25 we read that God's people during the Old Testament period "were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed." The law was put in charge to lead them to Jesus Christ so that they might be justified by faith and not by the works of the law. And after Jesus Christ came and faith in him became possible, they are no longer under the supervision of the law.

POINT 6. THE MESSIAH IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

The ultimate purpose of the Old Testament ceremonial law and rituals was to point to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. *The nation of Israel and its ceremonies were only the means of God's revelation, but not the final goal of God's revelation*. From the beginning God purposed that the means of revelation would fall away and make place for the goal

of revelation, namely Jesus Christ. Romans 10:4 teaches that Jesus Christ “is *the end* of the law”, or “*the goal, the meaning and the substance* of the law” (G: telos)! When Jesus Christ came, Israel as a people of God reached their final purpose.

According to Romans 3:21 and Galatians 3:8, *the gospel* has been proclaimed during the Old Testament period. The substance of the gospel is the Messiah, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). Jesus Christ is foreshadowed in the Old Testament law. Colossians 2:17 says that the Old Testament laws were “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Jesus Christ”. Thus, when Israel accepts and obeys the law, they accept and obey Jesus Christ. However, in order to understand Jesus Christ as the goal and substance of the Old Testament law, we should limit ourselves to the types in the Old Testament law that are explained in the New Testament as types that point forward to Jesus Christ.

First. The blood of the offerings is a type of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews 9:12-14 we read, “Jesus Christ did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” And 1 John 1: 7 says, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

Second. The sacrifices are types of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

In Hebrews 10:1-4 we read that the ceremonial law of the Old Testament was only “a shadow of the good things that were coming - not the realities themselves”. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were repeated endlessly year after year, but could never make the people perfect. The worshippers were not really cleansed and still felt guilty for their sins. The real purpose and meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices was to remind the people of their sins and to convince them that they were sinners. The Bible teaches that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Hebrews 9:26 and 10:10-18 teach clearly that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all on the cross does away with sins, forgives sins and makes believers holy and perfect forever! After the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. His sacrifice on the cross is the end of all other sacrifices in the world.

Third. The Day of Atonement is a type of the atonement that Christ made.

In 1 John 4:10 the Bible teaches us, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” The word *atonement* means that Christ’s death on the cross satisfied God’s holy and righteous anger against all sin and unrighteousness, turned God’s wrath away from the believer and took away his sins.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read Numbers 13-27. Next week we will introduce the book of Numbers.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.