

As we go through these regulations for worship,
we should pay attention to the fact that God *really cares* how he is worshiped!

When you come into the presence of a holy God,
it matters *how* you come!

You might be tempted to think – but there is no *Leviticus* in the New Testament!

Are you sure about that?

Go home tonight and read the book of Hebrews!

The book of Hebrews tells us how to read the book of Leviticus in the light of Christ –
and, indeed, how to read Christ in the light of Leviticus!

Hebrews focuses on the rituals for the Day of Atonement –
which, by the way, are exactly at the *center* of the book of Leviticus –
all of Leviticus hinges on the Day of Atonement!

But Hebrews briefly describes the tabernacle and its rituals in chapter 9,
adding “of these things we cannot *now* speak in detail.”

What Hebrews does in its explication of the Day of Atonement
is provide us with something of a key to unlocking the rest of Leviticus!
If the inspired author show how Christ fulfills the Day of Atonement –
then ordinary pastors can apply those same principles to expounding the rest of the book!

Tonight we start with the words, “Command Aaron and his sons” – verse 9.

In chapters 6 and 7, we are hearing special directions for the priests.

We are going back through the same offerings (for the most part!)
that we saw in chapters 1-5.

But in chapters 1-5, the focus was on what the worshiper was to do.
Now the focus is on what the priest is supposed to do.

“Command Aaron and his sons” shows us how God is appointing ordained leaders in his church.

Rather like how Christ establishes the Twelve –
who then ordain the Seven – and other leaders for the church,
commanding them to hand down the apostolic teaching
from one generation to the next.

1. Command Aaron and His Sons (6:8-7:21)

a. The Law of the Burnt [Ascension] Offering (v8-13)

⁸ [U] *The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* ⁹ *“Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the*

morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. ¹⁰ And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar. ¹¹ Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.

We start once again with the burnt offering – the ascension offering.

The burnt offering – or “ascension offering” –
was the foundation of the whole sacrificial system.

It is called the “ascension” offering because the whole animal is burnt –
and thus, the whole animal “ascends” up to God in smoke.

The word translated “offering” is *qorban* – which means “to draw near.”
So a burnt offering is quite literally, an ascent – drawing near to God!

When you offer a burnt offering – you are symbolically drawing near to God.
You are saying, in effect, we are here to worship you –
we are here to draw near to you.

Here in verse 9 we are told that the evening burnt offering would be left on the altar all night,
and in the morning, the priest would carry the ashes out of the camp to a clean place.

Trash heaps were generally *unclean* places.
But the *ash heap* from the altar would be a clean place.
The ashes from the LORD’s holy offerings
should not be dumped unceremoniously!

Note also that he had to change his clothes when he left the tabernacle.
His priestly garments were holy,
and could only be worn while he was in the sanctuary.
Therefore he had to change his clothes before dumping the ashes.

Then he would return and arrange the morning burnt offering on the altar.
(Numbers 28:1-8 specifies that this was a lamb,
with a tenth of an ephah of raw meal mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil,
together with a drink offering of a fourth of a hin of fermented drink.)

The morning burnt offering was the foundation (literally) of the other offerings,
which would be burnt on top of it.

Verse 12 then tells us:

¹² The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. ¹³ Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.

Three times in verses 9, 12, and 13, we are told that the fire of the altar shall be kept burning.
Why was it so important that it not go out?

Some have pointed out that the original fire on the altar had come down from heaven!
The picture, then, would be that of maintaining the holy fire that came from God himself.

Of course, given Israel's track record at obeying God...
I have no doubt that there was at least one priest who fell asleep!

And God never promised to do it over if they messed up!

It would be better to say that the continual never-ending fire
is a picture of the coming of the Holy Spirit
(symbolized at Pentecost in the coming of tongues of fire)

Patristic and Medieval commentators frequently note the connection
between the "fire of the priestly ritual" and the Holy Spirit
who "is to light and consume all aspects of the church's life,
all details of its faithfulness,
so that it becomes transformed into the shape of its promise,
which is God's indwelling in its body." (Radner, 82)

The fire was never to go out –
because the Holy Spirit was never to depart!

As the hymn-writer puts it,
"Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,
one holy passion filling all my frame:
the fullness of the heaven-descended Dove;
my heart an altar, and thy love the flame."
(George Croly, "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart")

b. The Law of the Grain [Tribute] Offering (v14-18)

¹⁴ "And this is the law of the grain offering. The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD in front of the altar. ¹⁵ And one shall take from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering and its oil and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering and burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ¹⁶ And the rest of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten unleavened in a holy place. In the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. ¹⁷ It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. It is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. ¹⁸ Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the LORD's food offerings. Whatever touches them shall become holy."

Verses 14-18 then deal with the law of the grain offering.

Again this is dealing with the morning and evening offering.

One handful is burnt in the fire,
while the rest was given to the priests.

They and their sons could eat of it.

Now, why couldn't their wives or daughters eat of it?

They were allowed to eat certain other parts of the sacrifices,
why not the grain offering?

Remember what the grain offering is – literally, the “tribute offering.”

The picture of ‘tribute’ is again important –

because it is given to the priests,
so that Israel may understand that they need a mediator,
one who will deal with their sins.

There must be a holy priest who will deal with sin.

And then verse 18 says that whatever touches these grain offerings shall become holy.

Holiness and unholiness, in Leviticus, are not just concepts.
They are tangible states.

If you touch something unclean, you become unclean.
Likewise, if you touch something holy, you become holy.

It does not mean that you become “sanctified” in our modern definition of sanctification.

Rather, it means that you become set apart–devoted to the Lord's use.

This is why verses 27-28 explain that anything
“contaminated” by holiness must be destroyed or scrubbed.

An earthenware vessel could not be sufficiently scrubbed to remove *all* the blood,
therefore it must be broken.

You cannot use a holy vessel for ordinary purposes again.

The bronze vessel could be cleansed and returned to ordinary use,
because if you scoured it well, you could remove the holiness.

This usage of “holiness” may help explain what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7,
when he says that the believing spouse “sanctifies” the unbelieving spouse,
so that your children are holy.

The Corinthians were concerned that the presence of an unbelieving spouse
contaminated the believer, and so wondered if divorce was necessary
in order to cleanse the believer.

Paul says, no, it's the other way around.

The holiness of the Christian “de-contaminates” the unbelieving spouse.

The unbelieving spouse becomes “holy”
like the vessel used to boil the sacrifice in Leviticus.

And, while Paul doesn't continue the parallel,

it's appropriate to suggest that there are only two options:
either this "holy" vessel must be scoured and rinsed
(i.e., baptized!),
or it must be destroyed.

The unbelieving spouse has an external "holiness" –
not an *internal* holiness.

The outside of the cup has been cleansed – but not the inside.

For that you need a baptism – with both water *and* the Holy Spirit –
as Jesus says to Nicodemus,
"unless one is born of water and the Spirit,
he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

c. The Consecration Offering (v19-23)

¹⁹ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁰ "This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah^[m] of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. ²¹ It shall be made with oil on a griddle. You shall bring it well mixed, in baked^[u] pieces like a grain offering, and offer it for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ²² The priest from among Aaron's sons, who is anointed to succeed him, shall offer it to the LORD as decreed forever. The whole of it shall be burned. ²³ Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten."

Verses 19-23 talk about the "consecration offering" –
this is a grain offering offered by a priest on the day when he is anointed.

Note that unlike the other grain offerings, this one must be burned entirely.

The grain offering was designed to show the need of a mediator,
but there was no one to mediate for the priest.

"The priest could not partake of what he himself offered to the Lord
as a sign of the consecration of his life."

And so every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned.
It shall not be eaten.

And so the grain offering of the priest – like the other grain offerings –
is said to be offered for a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

I should point out that Paul speaks of *us* as

"the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved
and among those who are perishing,
to one a fragrance from death to death,
to the other a fragrance from life to life." (2 Cor 2:15-16)

Christ – the living bread – the true bread who came down from heaven –
is a pleasing aroma to God –
and so we who are one body (one loaf) with him –
are also a pleasing aroma to the Father!

d. The Law of the Sin Offering (v24-30)

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 25 “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. 26 The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting. 27 Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is splashed on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was splashed in a holy place. 28 And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. 29 Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy. 30 But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire.

Verses 24-30 then return to the sin offering

Remember that the sin offerings for the priest and for the whole community
were burned outside the camp.

v30 explains that the reason was because the blood
had been brought into the tent of meeting,
to make atonement in the Holy Place.

Therefore its meat was too holy to be consumed by a priest.

But in the case of the tribal leader or the common Israelite,

the meat was given to the priest who performed the sacrifice.

All the males in his family could eat of it.

We’ll have a chance to talk more about gender later in Leviticus.

Here I just want you to notice that the males of the priestly family
have a responsibility to partake of the sin and guilt offerings.

e. The Law of the Guilt Offering (7:1-10)

7 “This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy. 2 In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown against the sides of the altar. 3 And all its fat shall be offered, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, 4 the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. 5 The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. 6 Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. 7 The guilt offering is just like the sin offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. 8 And the priest who offers any man's burnt offering shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. 9 And every grain offering baked in the oven and all that is prepared on a pan or a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers it. 10 And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall be shared equally

among all the sons of Aaron.

Verses 1-7 of chapter 7 then explain that the guilt offering has the same rules as the sin offering. And in verses 8-10 God clarifies that also in the case of the burnt offering, the priests may keep the hides, and the priest who offers a cooked grain offering keeps that, while the raw grain offerings were to be distributed equally among the priests.

Again, you can see how these laws are designed to make sure that the priests are provided for. They do not have an inheritance with the rest of their brothers – the sacrifices and offerings are their inheritance.

f. The Law of the Sacrifice of Peace Offerings (7:11-21)

i. Thanksgiving vs. Vows (v11-18)

¹¹ “And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. ¹² If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. ¹³ With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread. ¹⁴ And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. ¹⁵ And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. ¹⁶ But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten. ¹⁷ But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire. ¹⁸ If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.

Verses 11-21 then talk about the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings.

I should note that the word “sacrifice” is generally used of the peace offerings.

A burnt offering or a sin offering is not a sacrifice.

A sacrifice is a peace offering.

And there are three different reasons why a person might bring a peace offering.

1) as an expression of thankfulness for specific blessings (verse 11-15)

In this case he would bring unleavened loaves mixed with oil,
unleavened wafers mixed with oil,
and leavened loaves mixed with oil.

One of each would belong to the priest.

The flesh of the peace offering had to be eaten that same day.

But if he brought a peace offering

2) as the fulfillment of a vow, or

3) as a freewill offering for blessings in general. (v16-19)
In these instances it could be eaten on the second day as well.
But if he ate any on the third day,
his sacrifice would not be accepted, and he would bear his iniquity.

This may take a little explanation!
The standard peace offering was a thank offering—
connected with the burnt offering.
First you would bring the burnt offering to approach God,
then you would bring the peace offering as an offering of thanksgiving.
This meat had to be eaten the same day.
It was a required sacrifice, and had stricter regulations.

But the devout worshiper might also bring a peace offering voluntarily.
If you had made a vow before the Lord,
then when you had fulfilled your vow,
you would give thanks to the Lord
for his grace in enabling you to fulfill it,
and you would bring a peace offering.

Most of the vows that we take nowadays are “necessary” vows –
so, for instance, wedding vows (if you are going to get married,
then you must vow to live together the way that God commands).
If you testify in court, you must swear to tell the truth, the whole truth,
and nothing but the truth.

But you can take other vows – as you wish.
If you wish to commit yourself to following Christ in a particular way,
you may do so!

It’s important to note that in Israel you were never *required* to make a vow.
Deuteronomy 23:21-23 makes it clear that “if you refrain from vowing,
you will not be guilty of sin.”
But if you make a vow, and do not perform it, then you are guilty.
Also an Israelite could bring a peace offering simply out of his gratitude to God.
This was called a freewill offering.
But in either of these two cases,
since the sacrifice was not required,
there is less regulation.
You could eat the meat on the second day.

ii. Uncleaness Destroys Peace (v19-21)

¹⁹ “Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned up with fire. All who are clean may eat flesh, ²⁰ but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the LORD’s

peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be cut off from his people.

²¹ And if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people."

Verses 19-21 give further details.

If the flesh of the peace offering touches something unclean,
then it is contaminated—and shall not be eaten.

Further, only those who are ceremonially clean should partake of the peace offering.

The one who is unclean must be cut off from his people,
so if someone touches an unclean thing,
and then eats the Lord's peace offering,
he must be cut off.

This does not refer to the death penalty.

Rather, it refers to what we might call excommunication.

He is excluded from the fellowship of Israel.

It's not stated here whether there were any means of restoration,
but it is most likely that a guilt offering would suffice.

After all, the guilt offering was designed for someone
who unintentionally sinned with respect to the Lord's holy things.

So the one who was cut off from his people could be restored if he brought a guilt offering.

If someone did it intentionally, however, then he would be cut off permanently.

Willful rebellion against God was to be dealt with.

You see how Jesus deals with this in the NT –

as Jesus regularly shows mercy to sinners –

but is quite severe with the Pharisees and others who are “high-handed”
in their treatment of the helpless.

2. Speak to the People of Israel (7:22-38)

a. Do Not Eat Fat or Blood (v22-27)

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat. ²⁴ The fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it. ²⁵ For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the LORD shall be cut off from his people. ²⁶ Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. ²⁷ Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

In verse 22, the focus shifts back to the people of Israel.

These directions are for all Israelites – not just the priests.

Verses 22-27 then repeat the prohibition of fat and blood.

This is a reminder of what God had said in Leviticus 3:17

The fat belongs to God.

You shall not rob God by eating what belongs to him!

And blood is off-limits as well.

The life is in the blood, and God wanted his people to respect life in all creatures.

b. The Wave Offering and the Contribution for the Priests (v28-36)

²⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁹ “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. ³⁰ His own hands shall bring the LORD's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. ³¹ The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons. ³² And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. ³³ Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion. ³⁴ For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel. ³⁵ This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the LORD's food offerings, from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the LORD. ³⁶ The LORD commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the day that he anointed them. It is a perpetual due throughout their generations.”

Verses 28-34 now tells the people of Israel

about the priestly portion of fellowship/peace offerings

In the discussion of the peace offering in chapter 3

it said merely that the worshiper partook of the peace offering,

here we discover that the priests were also to partake of the peace offering.

The breast was given to the priesthood in general (verse 31),

and the right thigh was given to the officiating priest (verse 32).

The breast would be brought by the worshiper to the priest,

in order to be waved as a wave offering before the Lord.

This was designed as a visual act of submission to God

And also as a way of feeding the priests!

As verses 35-36 say, the priesthood was not left to the good will of the people;
their pay was required by God.

Paul uses this to explain why ministers should be paid.

In 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, he declares,

“Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service
get their food from the temple,

and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel

should get their living by the gospel.”
The details of OT economics have changed,
but the basic principle remains the same.

3. Conclusion (v37-38)

³⁷ This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, ³⁸ which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.

Leviticus is all about the holiness of the people of God.

But you cannot talk about holiness until you have dealt with sin.

Therefore Leviticus starts with the sacrifices, and then goes on to talk about holiness.

Because of what God has done for you in the sacrifice,
now live before him as his holy people.

And that is precisely the model that the New Testament follows.

Because of what God has done for you in Jesus Christ,
therefore be who you are in Christ.

Because your sins have been forgiven,

act like those who have been renewed in the image of Christ.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

Your sins have been forgiven,

you have been declared righteous in Jesus Christ,

and now God is at work in you to conform you to the likeness of our holy Savior.