

# THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

## FELLOWSHIP THROUGH SANCTIFICATION

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## THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Leviticus is one of the most important and enlightening books of the Bible. All that follows it in Scripture is colored by it. A clear understanding of its contents contributes greatly to our comprehension of the Bible's overall message. Yet many new Bible students bypass this wonderful book because the reading is so dull. Do they more deserve sympathy or rebuke?

To speak of Leviticus as dull reading misses the point of this writing completely. How could we expect a book like Leviticus, which is occupied throughout with regulations, to provide exciting reading? Obviously it is not meant just to be read but to be studied. It yields precious little of its treasure to mere reading. A reasonably concentrated study of its contents transforms it into one of the most intriguing articles in the scriptures. A great deal depends upon the right approach.

### The Stand Point

Perhaps, the first simple step toward understanding the message of Leviticus is to appreciate its standpoint. It is indicated in the first words of the opening chapter; *“And the Lord called unto Moses and spoke unto him out of The Tabernacle of the congregation.”* Before this moment, a distant God had spoken from the mount that burned with fire. Now, as we see at the end of Exodus, The Tabernacle is erected and a God who dwells among His people speaks to them out of The Tabernacle. The people are no longer addressed as sinners distant from God, but rather as a people brought into a new relationship with Him. A relationship of fellowship on the ground of a blood sealed covenant. This is the point at which Leviticus begins; God and His people in a new relationship of fellowship.

### Main Purpose

Israel must now be shown the responsibilities of such a relationship. Thus, Leviticus was written to show Israel how to live as a holy nation and to prepare the nation for the service of mediating the redemption of God to all nations. Primarily, Israel must be taught the Holiness of God.

Leviticus reveals this teaching in three ways. First, through the sacrificial system which insisted that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Second, in the precepts of the law which insisted on the one Divinely revealed standard for character and conduct. Third, in the penalties attaching to violations of the law which sternly proclaim the inflexibility of the Divine Holiness.

Also involved in this revelation of God's Holiness to Israel is the imperative insistence on their separation from other nations. These laws given to Israel were intended to ensure the separation. The main purpose of Leviticus then is to show Israel how to live as a holy nation in fellowship with her Holy God and thus prepare the nation for service of mediating the redemption of God to all nations.

### Preparatory Element

But, that is not all Leviticus was designed to do. There was a further more futuristic purpose; namely, to prepare Israel for the coming of Christ. This is done in two ways: 1) By awakening a sense of need, 2) By pointing forward (through the Tabernacle ritual) to the one all atoning offering on Calvary. Therefore, Leviticus follows Genesis and Exodus with obvious sequence. In Genesis, we see God's remedy for man's ruin; the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). In Exodus, we see God's answer to man's cry; the blood of the Lamb. In Leviticus, we see God's provision for man's need; a priest, a sacrifice, and an altar. Perhaps you are beginning to see the importance of this wonderful book. With its doctrine of mediation through a priest, absolution through sacrifice, and reconciliation at the altar, it becomes a special revelation to those who have found redemption and fellowship in Christ Jesus. In fact, it truly is the very heart of The Gospel.

### It's Abiding Element

First-Leviticus is a revelation of the divine character to ourselves today, as much as it was to Israel of old. God has not changed.

Second- it is a symbolic exposition of the basic principles which underlie all dealing between God and men, just as truly today as in the past. The spiritual realities which are pictorially declared in Leviticus abide for all time.

Third- Leviticus provides a body of civil law for the theocracy and although some of the

details in it are now absolute, the principles of it are such as should guide legislation even today.

Fourth- Leviticus is a treasury of symbolic and typical teaching. Here are the greatest spiritual truths enshrined in vivid symbols. Here are the greatest facts of the New Covenant (Instituted by Christ Jesus) illustrated by great types in the Old Covenant. Supremely it is in these ways an advance unveiling of Christ. It is a treasury of divinely chosen illustrations as to the way of a sinner’s salvation through the priestly work of the Son of God, and as to his present and future position and dignity as a redeemed man. Thus we see something of the abiding value of Leviticus.

### Structure and Contents

In our study of Genesis and Exodus, we have seen that to appreciate or become familiar with their structure is to be guided safely to their central message as well as their permanent value. The same applies to or is true of Leviticus. It is true that well known Bible scholars vary considerably in their analysis of this book. But, when you look at Leviticus fairly and squarely you will discover it is in two main parts which are marked off in an unmistakable way. The first part covers chapters 1-17. The second part covers chapters 18-27. And what is it that so clearly breaks the book up into these two parts. First, throughout the first seventeen chapters, we are dealing with non-moral regulation where as in the remaining ten chapters we are dealing with regulations concerning morals. The following chart highlights the two main parts of Leviticus. It also helps us to see that Leviticus rightly divides into two main parts.

Leviticus 1 -17 (non-moral regulations)	Leviticus 18-27 (moral regulations)
Worship	Practice
Tabernacle	Character & Conduct
Way to God by sacrifice	Walk with God by sanctification
Ceremonial & Physical defilement	Moral & Spiritual defilement
Purification provided	Punishment inflicted
Cleansing of the people	Clean living by the people

These observations help us to see that Leviticus rightly divides into two parts.

## The Central Message

This one simple division of the book into its two major parts suggests the main idea here. We have found in our consideration of the stand point that God speaks out of the tabernacle, having come down to dwell in fellowship with his redeemed people who have been brought into this new relationship of fellowship on the ground of the blood-sealed covenant.

The idea of this new relationship of fellowship is the key to Leviticus. In part one, we see *the basis of fellowship* in *propitiatory sacrifice* (Note: propitiate simply means to appease or pacify, to make atonement. A propitiatory sacrifice is one that would appease God and make amends for the guilty party). In part two, we have *the obligation of fellowship* in *practical sanctification* or separation. In other words part one shows us the “God-ward foundation of fellowship” = *sacrifice*. Part two illustrates the “man-ward condition of fellowship” = *sanctification*. We can rightfully conclude that Leviticus is mainly concerned with fellowship. It is in fact the supreme Old Testament illustration of the great New Testament truth found in 1 John 1:7 *...If we walk in the light as I-He is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.* Part one of Leviticus says, “The blood cleanses us.” Part two says, “Yes, the blood cleanses us but, only if we walk in the light.” The message of the whole book is that through these two things together, cleansing by the blood and walking in the light, we have fellowship one with another and truly our fellowship is “with the Father.”

Fix clearly in your mind these two main divisions:

Part One, Chapters 1-17: *The Ground of Fellowship: Sacrifice*

Part Two, Chapters 18-27: *The Walk of Fellowship: Separation*

Now, let's briefly explore these two parts and see the orderly design in each.

## **Part One**

The first seven chapters are exclusively occupied with the offerings which were to be offered. The next three chapters are all about the priest who was to officiate in connection with the offerings. The following six chapters are all about the physical and the ceremonial cleansing of the people both, individually and corporately. The final chapter emphasizes the one place to which the offerings might be brought: the altar within the gate of the tabernacle.

Part One breaks down as follows:

<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Theme</b>
1-7	Offerings
8-10	Priesthood
11-16	People
17	Altar

## **Part Two**

In this part, we find this same kind of orderly progression. In chapters 18-20, we have the regulations concerning the people. Chapters 21-22 deal with regulations concerning the priest. Chapters 23-24 highlight regulations concerning the feast with a closely connected word in chapter 24 about light and the shewbread in the sanctuary. Finally, chapters 25-27 bring us regulations concerning Israel's occupancy of Canaan.

Part Two breaks down as follows:

<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Theme</b>
18-20	People
21-22	Priest
23-24	Feast
25-27	Canaan

Through this structural analysis, we can see the central message of Leviticus is fellowship with God through sacrificial cleansing and walking in separation.

It is our prayer that you will use this information and the outline we have included to help you discover the great treasure of truth found in this wonderful book of Leviticus. Also, we recommend that you use a good commentary to aid you in your study. God will bless you as you are faithful to Him.

	<b>THE FURNITURE</b>	<b>SYMBOLICAL MEANING</b>	<b>TYPICAL MEANING</b>
<b>1</b>	Brazen Alter	Atonement through sacrifice	The Atonement of Christ
<b>2</b>	Brazen Layer	Spiritual renewal	Regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
<b>3</b>	Table of Shewbread	Spiritual sustenance	Christ the Bread of Life the Holy Spirit the water of life.
<b>4</b>	Candle stand	Spiritual illumination	Christ the Light of the world, and especially His own people.
<b>5</b>	Altar of Incense	Acceptable supplication	Prayer in the same name of Jesus (see John xiv. 13 with Rev. v. 8).
<b>6</b>	The Ark	Access through Covenant relationship	Christ as the covenant-ground of our access to God.
<b>7</b>	Mercy Seat and Shekinah	The very presence and life of God	Christ as "Mercy Seat" (Rom. iii. 25), (Shekinah) Holy Spirit as the impartial life of God.