

New Testament Priests

Leviticus 8-10

Introduction

I have an admission to make, in light of our study today. We have been studying through the Bible, book by book. We started in the book of Genesis and went on to Exodus and then, to Numbers and Deuteronomy. In other words, I skipped a book and no one complained! It was the world famous book of Leviticus.

I will admit that I was really not excited about the book of Leviticus. Do not look at me like that – do you have your devotions out of this book?! How many have memorized a verse of scripture from the book of Leviticus? I would expect to hear no one say they have.

However, because I have made a commitment to you and before the Lord to teach through the Bible, I knew that I was facing the huge wall called Leviticus. I would teach whatever is in the book, a lot of which is a repeat of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Because this is the first time I have taught through Leviticus, I did not realize it contained so many truths that are indeed rich. In fact, the pages of this book were stuck together in my Bible, and I had to unstick them!

So, several weeks ago on my vacation, I took my Leviticus commentaries – all two of them, my books, and my Bible. I decided that while I was on vacation, I would read from no book other than the book of Leviticus. That was thrilling on vacation, I will tell you. I would sit down and open the book of Leviticus and read it through. There were several passages that I read and re-read and re-read, until this book, as I expect it will for you, came alive.

Today, I am going to start by tying in Leviticus with the New Testament. We cannot understand its truths unless we understand the way in which it relates to its anti-type, or all of the truths found in the New Testament. Then, in our next discussion, we are going to start with chapter 1 and study the offerings and how they relate, especially to the anti-type; that is, Jesus Christ. After that, we will discuss the feasts of Israel.

There is so much in this book to be learned. So, turn in your Bible to chapter 8 of Leviticus and we will introduce the subject of the priesthood.

Now, as you may know, the book of Leviticus was written and so named because it was given to the Levites. That was the tribe that God elected to be the special agent representing the people to God and God to the people. So, the name Leviticus comes from the Levite tribe, to which these truths were given.

I discovered as well, that this book has more direct verbiage or quotes from God than any other book in the Bible. In fact, the Ten Commandments and all that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai took a matter of days, but it took Moses more than a month to transcribe all that God gave him in this book. Leviticus is indeed a weighty book, and it is a book that is alive.

The Setting of Old Testament Priests

Look at chapter 8, verses 1 through 5 of Leviticus, as we introduce the subject of the priesthood and the way it relates to you and I today, as New Testament priests.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread, and assemble all the congregation at the doorway of the tent of meeting." So Moses did just as the Lord commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the tent of meeting, Moses said to the congregation, "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded to do."

Moses will take aside the Levites, or literally Aaron and his sons, from which will come the fruit of that Levitical tribe. He will say several things to them, but basically, you could write into your text the words, "There is cleansing." Look at verse 6.

Then Moses had Aaron and his sons come near and washed them with water.

Moses not only cleansed them in a special way, but he clothed them in a special way. Continue to verses 7 and 8.

He put the tunic on him and girded him with the sash, and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the artistic band of the ephod, with which he tied it to him. He then placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim.

We are not certain today, what the Urim and the Thummim were, but these were special agents of God's communication. They may have been several stones or precious gems. Look at verse 9.

He also placed the turban on his head, and on the turban, at its front, he placed the golden plate, the holy crown, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Can you imagine looking at Aaron, dressed in all of this regal finery? It must have been an awesome sight.

Moses cleanses, clothes, and then, consecrates. Continue to verses 10 and 11.

Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.

The New Testament anti-type of the oil in the Old Testament is the oil that is the Holy Spirit. Moses consecrates it – he makes sure that everything about their ministry is saturated with this oil. Today, you and I need to make sure that everything about our ministries must be saturated in and throughout with the Holy Spirit. Look at verses 12 through 14.

Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him. Next Moses had Aaron's sons come near and clothed them with tunics, and girded them with sashes and bound caps on them, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Then he brought the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering.

In other words, this bull is now the sacrifice – the replacement so they can live. Continue to verse 15.

Next Moses slaughtered it and took the blood and with his finger put some of it around on the horns of the altar, and purified the altar. Then he poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it, to make atonement for it.

Skip to verses 18 through 19.

Then he presented the ram of the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. Moses slaughtered it and sprinkled the blood around on the altar.

Look at verses 22 and 23.

Then he presented the second ram, the ram of ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. Moses slaughtered it and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

This is an interesting way of saying, "Aaron, everything about you is covered by blood. Everything about which you represent must be seen through blood."

In other words, Aaron's ear is hearing God as He communicates. As he hears, his hand is moved to action; to service. His feet lead him into the path of doing God's will as he leads the people as their priest. That is a powerful thought as his entire body is consecrated to God.

Now, look at verse 25.

He took the fat, and the fat tail, and all the fat that was on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver and the two kidneys and their fat and the right thigh.

If you are reading this with me, you probably have said a one word commentary of, "Yuck," or, as my little girl is saying, "Gross," which sounds like "Gwoss" when she says it. Moses has opened this animal and is performing surgery. He finds "the lobe of the liver". I do not know what that is, and I do not want to know what that is! Moses is going through this incredible process; this squeamish, gooey, consecrating work.

I read this and in all honesty, I was so fascinated that I could not get past it. I like, as I read the Bible, to picture what the people are going through. I see Moses with his hands in this animal, finding the liver. I would be checking out at this point – I could never

be an Old Testament priest! I thank God I am a New Testament priest!

I know a lot of you are like me – you are squeamish. Unfortunately, and I say unfortunately, but I am really teasing, part of my ministry involves going to the hospital. If you are in the hospital and I find out, I will visit you. However, I do it with difficulty because of my stomach – I am really squeamish. Now no one will tell me when they are in the hospital, right?! You would not want me to come and get sick!

The problem I have when I walk into a hospital room is that I empathize. I see you lying there and I immediately think, “I wonder how that feels? That must hurt. There must be such agony in that.”

I can only stay about five minutes and then, I had better get out of there. I know some preachers though, who seem to get a real kick out of hospital visits. They bring their Bible and read a long passage of scripture and pray and talk and bring their lunch. I come in and stay for about two or three minutes and that is good. I find out how you are doing and then, I am gone!

I had a hilarious experience several years ago when I visited a dear lady who was in the hospital. I walked in and this lady was all hooked up, and she wanted to talk. She said, “Come on over and pull up a chair.”

So, I went over and sat down in a chair right by her bed. She then started talking to me about her surgery, with all of the details. If I visit you in the hospital, please do not tell me about your surgery! She started going through all of the details and did not notice that I was sitting there putting my hands on my knees by her bed. She must have thought I was praying or something. Then she said, “They had the toughest time finding the vein for the I.V. this morning.”

I started breathing heavily. That is how squeamish I am!

So, do not overlook what is happening with these Israelites. They go through this entire process that none of us have to go through, for the glory of God. They go through this consecrating process in which the animal has taken their place and they will sacrifice it.

Look at chapter 9, verses 1 through 4.

Now it came about on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the

elders of Israel; and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a calf, a bull, for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without defect, and offer them before the Lord. Then to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both one year old, without defect, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord, and a grain offering mixed with oil; for today the Lord shall appear to you.’”

They do all of that. Skip to verses 22 through 24.

Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. Then fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Imagine that.

Two types of Old Testament sacrifices

Now in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus, there were basically two kinds of offerings, or offerings for two purposes:

1. One offering was for the purpose of reconciliation, or so that the people could be reconciled to God. They could go to God for the purpose of expiation; that is, the covering of sin, not total expiation.
2. The second offering was for the purpose of celebration. The people had nothing in mind; nothing to receive, they simply wanted to go to God in celebration of what He had done for them. We are going to look at this type of offering in detail in our next discussion.

Now, in the New Testament, the offering for reconciliation has already taken place, right? It has taken place in the person of Jesus Christ. Romans, chapter 5, verse 10, says,

. . . we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son . . .

This happened once for all. Those of us who have received Jesus Christ as our personal Savior have been reconciled to God. We enjoy His favor and His acceptance. We are part of His family through Christ. He is the picture of the bull, the ram, the goat, and the lamb.

There is also another type of sacrifice and that is the sacrifice, or sacrifices, of celebration. That, ladies and gentlemen, takes place today by New Testament priests. If there is any doubt, turn to I Peter, chapter 2, and you will discover that, while the methods have changed in celebrating God's goodness, the principle abides. Look at verses 4 and 5.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

We are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy what? Priesthood. To offer up spiritual what? Sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Skip to verse 9.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

So, obviously, we are priests today, in a different sense, but yet, we sacrifice to God.

The Sacrifices of New Testament Priests

What do we sacrifice today, as New Testament priests? In the remainder of our discussion, I want to go through several sacrifices that we give to God.

Have you got your Bible ready? We will start by turning to the book of Romans.

The sacrifice of our bodies in spiritual service

1. First, there is the sacrifice of our bodies in spiritual or reasonable service.

Look at Romans, chapter 12, verse 1.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God,

which is your spiritual [reasonable] service .

..

Just as the Old Testament priest had blood put on the right lobe of his ear, and on his right thumb, and on his right toe symbolizing the consecration of his body, and the consecration of his hands, and the consecration of his feet, so we are told in this verse, "You, as living sacrifices, present *yourselves* to God."

The tough part about this is that we are alive and not dead, like a sacrificial animal, and we can crawl off the altar, can't we? So we are told to continually offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

The word that is translated "service," in the King James Version, is the Greek word, "latreia," which has an interesting past. It originally meant, "that which you earned from working for pay". Then, because what you did for pay was something that symbolized your entire life process, it began to mean, "that for which you dedicated your life". Then, we include a biblical understanding and translate it, as the New American Standard does, "your service of 'latreia,'" which has the meaning of, "worship".

"Worship" is the dedication of your life and my life to God. We do not only go to church on Sunday to worship God. By dedicating our lives and everything we do to God, whether it is at the office, or in the home, or whatever we do with our hands, we have been involved in worship Monday through Saturday. We, today, also do what? We come to worship collectively with that which we have already been doing individually.

That is the way the word "service" is used in this verse. Real worship is the offering of everyday life to God.

The sacrifice of faith

2. Secondly, there is the sacrifice of faith.

Let us follow Paul into a Roman prison, as he writes the book of Philippians, and find out about what he refers to as the sacrifice of faith. We just read Paul's writings of the sacrifice of the body in spiritual service or the sacrifice of life in Romans, chapter 12. Now, secondly, we will read Paul's description of the sacrifice of faith.

Look at chapter 2, verses 14 through 17.

Do all things without grumbling and disputing; so that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of

God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

When I studied this, I got a little side-tracked because one of the most incredible things about this passage is the humility of Paul. He talks of being poured out as a drink offering. He is referring to a pagan practice in Rome and Greece. Their high priest would stand before the altar and offer an animal as a sacrifice. Then, when the altar was crimson hot and the sacrificed animal was burning, the priest would take a goblet of wine, called a libation, and would pour it on to the animal. Because the altar would be so hot, that libation would disappear in a moment in a puff of steam.

Paul is saying, in this passage, “I am a libation.” In other words, “My ministry is like a passing puff when compared to your faith.”

Wow! Paul is the individual who is fathering this church and yet, he says, “Your faith in God is *so* incredible that my ministry, to me, is like a puff of steam.”

I am sure you can see how I got side-tracked on that tremendous thought.

Paul says the thing that was most impressive about this little Philippian church was their faith in God.

Why was their faith impressive? Philippi was a town that garrisoned Roman troops. It was a fort; a town that was used specifically for the protection, the feeding, and the training of Roman soldiers. This church was right in the middle of that. It would be like trying to start a church right next to the Red Army in China. Right in the midst of so much oppression, there was the church at Philippi meeting in this town. They could only explain their existence in light of God’s power.

Do you know what faith is? Faith, or the life of faith, is living in such a way that when we look back over our shoulders, the only way we can explain how we live is in light of the power of God.

Do you know what a church is to be, in order to be this kind of example? It is to live; it is to minister in such a way that when you look back over the year, you can only explain what has been happening in light of God.

One tragedy, ladies and gentlemen, is that so many of us live explainable lives. We have “all our ducks in a row”; we never risk, never jump, never leap, never try. Why? Because we want to make sure we can see it all.

What is it about your life and my life and what is it about our church that can only be explained in terms of God’s power?

Paul said of this Philippian church, “You have sacrificed something pleasing to God and it is your faith.”

The sacrifice of care

3. There is also, thirdly, what we will call the sacrifice of care.

Turn to Philippians, chapter 4, and look at verse 14.

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

Paul is writing from a prison cell. Note the agony in this verse and in verse 15.

You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

How did the Philippians share? Continue to verse 16.

for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

They sent care packages. Look at verse 17.

Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit [“karpos” or fruit] which increases to your account.

When you give to me, that is fruit in your behalf. Continue to verse 18a.

But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, . . .

You have got to be kidding! Paul is writing from a prison cell and yet, he is saying, “I’ve got all I need.”

Note what Paul calls these care packages, in the last part of verse 18.

. . . a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

Look back at verse 15. Paul basically says, “Everyone forgot me but you alone. You were the only ones who remembered me.”

Now, Paul could have stopped at that point. If I, Stephen Davey, were writing this epistle, I would have stopped and listed the people, the church at Colossi, the church at Ephesus; I would have listed all of the names of those who had forgotten me. Paul, however, never does. He only emphasizes the positive; that is, “You remembered me,” but he does tell them, “You alone.”

When I was growing up, our Sunday afternoon tradition was to get a basketball after church and go about eight blocks to a public school where there was an outdoor basketball court. My father, my three brothers, and I would play for a couple of hours. One day, we had finished pounding the pavement, so we got in the car and went back home. When we arrived, we discovered that we had left my youngest brother at the basketball court. My brothers and I voted that we leave him there! My father, however, voted to go back to get him, and did so. My brother’s comment was, “Daddy, why’d you forget me?”

You try to explain that one! You cannot! “Well, I, uh, . . . your mother . . .”

Whether you are five years old, as he was, or seventy-five, the most pitiful cry of the human heart is, “They forgot me.”

The Philippian church remembered Paul. They sent Epaphroditus trotting to the prison with some care packages. Paul opened them and there might have been a parchment or two, or some food, or a garment. He tore into that like a college student when he gets a care package from home. He said, “Oh, you remembered me! And your remembering of me is a sacrifice to God.”

Sending that note, making that phone call, taking that action or speaking that word that in some way shows love and care is a sacrifice for New Testament priests like you and me.

The sacrifice of evangelism

4. We will call the fourth sacrifice, the sacrifice of evangelism.

Turn to Romans, chapter 15, and look at verses 15 and 16. There is an interesting thought in these verses.

But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, every time Paul shared the gospel to the Gentile world, he considered that act or effort a ministry; an offering to God. When you and I share Jesus Christ with someone, we are, as New Testament priests, offering something precious to God.

The sacrifice of prayer

5. There is also, fifthly, the sacrifice of prayer. Look at Revelation, chapter 8, verse 3.

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

The angel standing beside the throne of God adds incense to the prayers of the saints. You can picture your prayers as wisps of smoke ascending into the heavens before the throne of God. You are praying and the effort and discipline of your prayers is a sacrifice that does not go unnoticed by our God.

The sacrifice of praise

6. Lastly, and I have saved my favorite until last, there is the sacrifice of praise.

Turn to Hebrews, chapter 13, verses 15 and 16. I love this.

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Did you catch that?! “Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God”. In fact, there are three

sacrifices: the sacrifice of praise, sharing, and doing good.

The sacrifice of praise – the Old Testament concept of praise

Now, the Old Testament concept of praise was not necessarily standing up and saying, “Praise the Lord” or “Hallelujah”. That is great, if you want to do that. However, the Old Testament concept of praise revolved around two things:

- first, remembering or recalling God’s attributes;
- secondly, repeating God’s acts.

The Old Testament concept of praise was an intellectual exercise, born out of a heart of love and faith for everything that God is and everything that God does.

Old Testament illustration of praise – Psalm 145

One of the best illustrations of praise in the Old Testament is Psalm, chapter 145. Turn to this Psalm, which is the last Psalm in the book of Psalms that has the name of David attached to it. From this Psalm, I am going to give three ingredients of praise.

- The first is the ingredient of homage.

Look at verse 1 of Psalm, chapter 145.

I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever.

David is saying, “I will praise God because God is my King, and God, as my King and my God, deserves my praise.”

We do not praise God only because we feel like it; we praise God because He deserves it.

“I will extol You” means, “I will lift You up; I will exalt You; I will give You Your rightful place.” That is homage to our King.

- Praise also involves, secondly, habit.

Look at verse 2.

Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever.

Does David say “every other day”? No. “Every day”.

- Thirdly, praise involves as well, the ingredient of honor.

Look at verse 3 and circle the words “great”.

Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.

Skip to verses 6 and 7.

Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness. They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.

He is great! Honor Him. That is praise.

The privilege was ours, at Dallas Theological Seminary, to sit at the feet of a great man of God, Dr. Wendell Kempton. I used that word “great” and I am about to get on to myself for using that word because he used an illustration that has really seared into my thinking.

Dr. Kempton has had a great impact on the lives of professional athletes. One Bible study that he had in his home was with professional basketball players. He read Psalm 145 and then, said to them, “Let’s go around the room and I want you to tell me what you think of when you think about the greatness of God.”

His wife went first and said something very meaningful. They continued around the room and finally, got to Julius Irving, who was a new believer at the time. Dr. Kempton was afraid that because he was a new believer, he would not have anything to say. He felt a little embarrassed for him. However, Julius sat there quietly looking at his Bible for a moment and then, looked up and addressed the group. He said, “You know, all my life people have come up to me and said, ‘Great game, Julius. You’re a great player, Julius. You’re great.’ When I read this Psalm, it strikes me that the only person deserving the term ‘great,’ is God.”

Praise involves honor, honoring God.

Application

Let us tie this up with two thoughts of application.

1. First, New Testament sacrifices are not the exclusive right of a few believers – so take advantage of them.

In the Old Testament, only the Levites were able to go into the holy place and only the high priest was allowed into the holy of holies or the most holy place. Today, however, all of us, not just an exclusive tribe, but every one of us can offer these sacrifices to God.

2. Secondly, New Testament sacrifices are an inclusive obligation of all – so take responsibility for them.

I wonder if there is a priest hearing this and it has been a long time since you have offered the sacrifice of praise. Perhaps there are priests who have never offered to God the sacrifice of evangelism. Perhaps there are those who are not offering the sacrifice of prayer or the sacrifice of care.

When you pillow your head tonight, and for the next few days, let these questions come to your mind, “What kind of priest was I today? What kind of sacrifices did I offer my God today?”