

The Law of Moses

Lesson One: The Ten Commandments

Exodus 19:1-20:26; 32:1-35



This period of history actually begins with the flight of the children of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 1-18). God freed the Israelites from Egypt through a series of ten plagues. During the flight, Pharaoh hardened his heart once again, and pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea. God parted the Red Sea allowing the Israelites to escape, and destroying the bulk of Pharaoh's army (Exodus 14). The Israelites then traveled south to Mount Sinai.

Mount Sinai.

At Mount Sinai, Moses received God's moral, civil and religious laws. He also received specific instructions as to how the tabernacle was to be constructed, and the proper form of worship.

Moses departed up to the mountain and remained there for forty days. During his absence the children of Israel became discouraged and angry. They persuaded Aaron to build an image of a calf out of gold. This image would have been similar to the false gods of Egypt. As Moses came down from Sinai, he saw the rebellion before him and broke the commandments which were written by God. The calf was ground into a powder, mixed with drinking water, and the children of Israel were forced to drink it. Moses later rewrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) were laws given by God as a practical guide for daily living. These laws involved man's duty to God and his fellow man. Although these laws were given more than three thousand years ago, they are still relevant today, and the *principles* of these commands are a part of New Testament Christianity (Mark 12:30). They are also referred to as the Decalogue, from the Greek word meaning "ten words."

The Ten Commandments are divided into two sections. The first four commands involved man's duty to God. The final six involve man's duty to his fellow man. The Ten Commandments may be summarized as follows:

1. Trust in God only (Exodus 20:3-4)
2. Worship God only (Exodus 20:5-6)
3. Hold and use God's name in honor (Exodus 20:7)
4. Take time for God (Exodus 20:8-11)
5. Respect and obey your parents (Exodus 20:12)

Notes

Memory Verse

*...If you will indeed
obey my voice and keep
my covenant, you shall
be my treasured
possession among all
peoples,..*

Exodus 19:5

6. Protect and respect human life (Exodus 20:13)
7. Be faithful to your spouse (Exodus 20:14)
8. Do not take what does not belong to you (Exodus 20:15)
9. Do not lie about others (Exodus 20:16)
10. Be satisfied with what you have (Exodus 20:17)

About 1,300 year after God gave these commandments, Jesus upheld them. He placed his stamp of approval on these commandments by declaring, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have come not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Of historical interest is the Code of Hammurabi. This is an ancient Babylonian Code which bears many similarities to the Ten Commandments. However, the law given at Mount Sinai reflects a higher view of the nature of God, his holiness and his requirements for his people.

New Testament Application

When Jesus was asked to name the first and greatest commandment, he responded, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like to it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. However, we see in this first command a summary of the first four commandments. Each of these involves our love for God and our obedience to him. Though the specifics of the Commandments have changed under the New Covenant, the principle of placing God first and rendering obedience to him is unaltered (see Matthew 6:33).

The other six commandments are dealt with in Christ's statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This, too, comes from the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18). Just as he has always required loyalty to himself, God has always required that we be hospitable to our fellows (see for example Exodus 22:21, 23:9, Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:19). Jesus brought this principle to its highest level by requiring not only action (or restraint of action) but also proper attitude. Consider the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Matthew 5:21-22 | "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. |
| Matthew 5:27-28 | "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. |
| Matthew 5:33-37 | "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. |

Under the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross along with the rest of the Law of Moses (Colossians 2:14). However, we do have commands in the New Testament which relate to our duties to God (cf. John 4:24; et al.), and our duties to one another (cf. Galatians 6:10; James 1:27; et al.). We are not obligated to follow the Ten Commandments today, but we are required to recognize that the principles involved are still a part of our spiritual life. These principles still reflect the holiness and goodness of God, and obligate us to recognize and respect humankind as God's creation.

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Lesson Two: The Tabernacle (Part 1)

Exodus 25:1-27:21; 30:1-31:18; 35:1-38:31; 39:32-40:38



As we discuss the tabernacle, we will approach it from a physical standpoint first. In this lesson we want to look at God's instructions to Moses relating to the construction of the tabernacle and the furnishings which were to be included. In the next lesson, we will focus on the method of worship at the tabernacle, how the tabernacle was to be moved, and compare and contrast the tabernacle to Jesus.

The Outer Court Exodus 27:9-19

The outer courtyard of the tabernacle measured 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. This courtyard was surrounded by a fence made of hangings of fine linen. The south side measured 100 cubits and was erected using twenty pillars and sockets of bronze. The hooks and bands were to be of silver. These specifications also applied to the north side. This would apply to the west side, except that the length would be fifty cubits.

The east side was completely different since it contained the entrance into the courtyard. It measured a total of fifty cubits. However, on each side of the gate was a wall of fifteen cubits; using three pillars and sockets each. The gate was twenty cubits long and made from fabric of blue, purple and scarlet. It was erected on four pillars and sockets. The sockets were of bronze, the hooks of silver, and the pegs were of bronze.

The Bronze Altar Exodus 27:1-8

The bronze altar, or the altar of burnt offerings, sat just inside the gate of the courtyard. It was made of acacia wood. This type of wood was very hard, resistant to heat and brownish-orange in color. It usually grew near fast moving water, and is still used today for cabinet making. The altar measured five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high. At each corner was a horn shaped ornament, and the entire structure was to be overlaid in bronze. Moses was also instructed to make the utensils and the gate out of bronze and the poles used to carry the altar out of acacia wood.

The Bronze Laver Exodus 30:17-21

The bronze laver (sink) was used by the priests for ceremonial washings before offering the sacrifices. It was positioned between the tabernacle and the altar. It was constructed entirely

Notes

Memory Verse

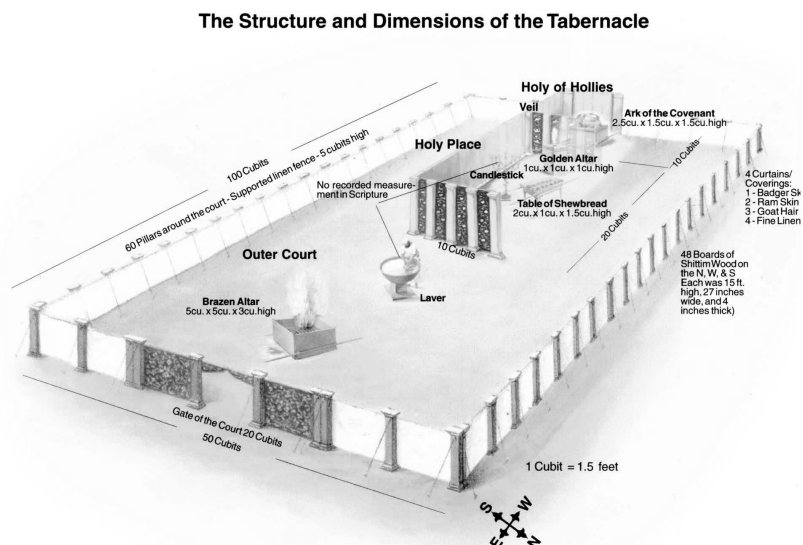
And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and all of its furniture, so you shall make it.
Exodus 25:8-9

out of bronze. Aaron and his sons were under penalty of death if they attempted to perform any act of worship without first washing their hands and feet in the laver.

The Tabernacle Exodus 26:1-37, 31:1-11

Just beyond the bronze laver was the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a tent-like structure which was divided into two chambers: the holy place, and the most holy place. The walls of the tabernacle were made from ten linen curtains of blue, purple and scarlet. Woven into the fabric were “artistic designs of cherubim” (NKJV). Each curtain measured twenty eight cubits high and four cubits wide. The curtains were held together with clasps of gold. The roof of the tabernacle was made of eleven curtains of goat’s hair.

To hold the walls of the tabernacle, God instructed Moses to make an elaborate system of boards, pillars and sockets. The boards were made of acacia wood, the sockets of silver and the wood was to be overlaid with gold. In Exodus 26:15-30, God had a fairly complicated system of attaching these boards and sockets to each other, and finally the curtains to them.



A. The Holy Place

As you entered the Holy Place, on your right stood the table of showbread (Exodus 25:23-30). This table was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It had a molding of gold which surrounded it, and stood upon four legs. Rings of gold held poles made of acacia wood overlaid with gold which were used to carry the table. All of the dishes and other utensils were to be made of gold. Twelve loaves of showbread were to be set on the table before the Lord at all times (see Leviticus 24:5-9).

Just opposite the table of showbread was the golden lamp stand (Exodus 25:31-40). It was a seven-bowled stand made from one piece of solid gold. The bowls were to be in the shape of almond blossoms. The entire piece was constructed from one talent of pure gold. It has been estimated that the golden lamp stand would be worth \$5,760,000.00 today.

At the rear of the Holy Place, just in front of the veil, was the altar of incense. This altar was used by the priests to burn the incense during the times of offering. It was made of acacia wood and was one cubit long, one cubit wide and two cubits high. Like the table of showbread, it was overlaid with gold and was decorated with moldings of pure gold. Also it was fitted with rings of gold and poles of acacia overlaid with gold for transportation purposes.

B. The Most Holy Place

The veil (Exodus 26:31-35) which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was made of the same fabric (color and design) as the fabric used for the walls of the tabernacle. It was to hang upon four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, using hooks of pure gold. God states that its purpose was to “be a divider for you between the Holy Place and the Most Holy.”

The only piece of furniture inside the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant or Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:10-22). We have devoted an entire lesson to this, therefore we will not discuss it in any detail here (See Lesson Nine). Needless to say, it was quite ornate and the most sacred piece of furniture in the tabernacle. It was here that the presence of God dwelt, and where atonement was made each year for the sins of the people.

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Lesson Three: The Tabernacle (Part 2)

Exodus 30:1-10, 17-21, 34-38, Lev 1:1-7:38, 24:1-9, Num 2:1-4:33



As we continue our discussion of the Tabernacle, it will be good to focus on how worship was conducted there, on how it was moved, and then we will look at how the furniture of the tabernacle looks forward to the person and work of Jesus.

The Worship at the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle worked as a conduit between God and the Nation of Israel. As long as it was stationary, the presence of the Lord was evident by a cloud during the day and a fire during the night, Numbers 9:15-17. This was where the Israelites could come to in order to worship. Most Israelite men would be most familiar with the altar near the front of the outer court. This is where the offerings and sacrifices would be presented to God by the Levites and the Priests. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter into the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle with an offering on behalf of the people. This day was filled with much ceremony and symbolism. Other days, depending on the Feast Day or the Season, the focus might be on another part of the Tabernacle. Almost each day there would be a good deal of activity in and around the Tabernacle.

The Movement of the Tabernacle

The design of the tabernacle (tent) was for it to be moved often and fairly easily. This work was done by the Levites. The Levites' work was divided among themselves according to the children of Levi. The Gershonites (sons of Gershon, son of Levi) had the task of packing up the curtains, boards and big things of the tabernacle and putting them on wagons to move. The Merarites (sons of Merari, son of Levi) took all of the cords and the pins that were put into the ground to hold the walls of the tabernacle upright. The Kohathites (sons of Kohath, son of Levi) had the responsibility for the transportation of the furniture of the tabernacle which is described in Numbers 4.

It is interesting how each of the curtains of the tabernacle and the most of the furniture of the tabernacle was created with sockets and rings. While these were made to provide ease of transportation and set up, they also provided a constant reminder, even while stationary, that this tent was created in order to be moved. The Tabernacle served as a reminder to the Nation of Israel that they had a leader (God) who was guiding them on a journey to a better place.

Notes

Memory Verse

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and all of its furniture, so you shall make it.

Exodus 25:8-9

The Tabernacle was to be built according to the specific pattern that was given to Moses while he was on the mountain, Exodus 25:40. This pattern was designed to train the Israelites to recognize Christ and his work in our salvation under the New Covenant, Hebrews 8:5-6. The Tabernacle was created to point to Christ. Notice how each part of the Tabernacle points in some way to what Jesus has done and is doing for his people.

Bronze Altar represents the Cross—Exodus 40:29, John 12:32-33

Bronze Laver represents Christ's washing us—Exodus 30:18-21, 1 John 1:7, 1 Peter 1:22, 3:21

Outer Court represents the world or the birth of the flesh—Exodus 27:9-18, Revelation 11:1-2

The First Veil (used to enter the Holy Place) represents the new birth, John 3:5, Acts 2:38

The Holy Place represents the Church—Hebrews 8:12

The Lamp Stand represents Christ and the Gospel, John 1:4-9

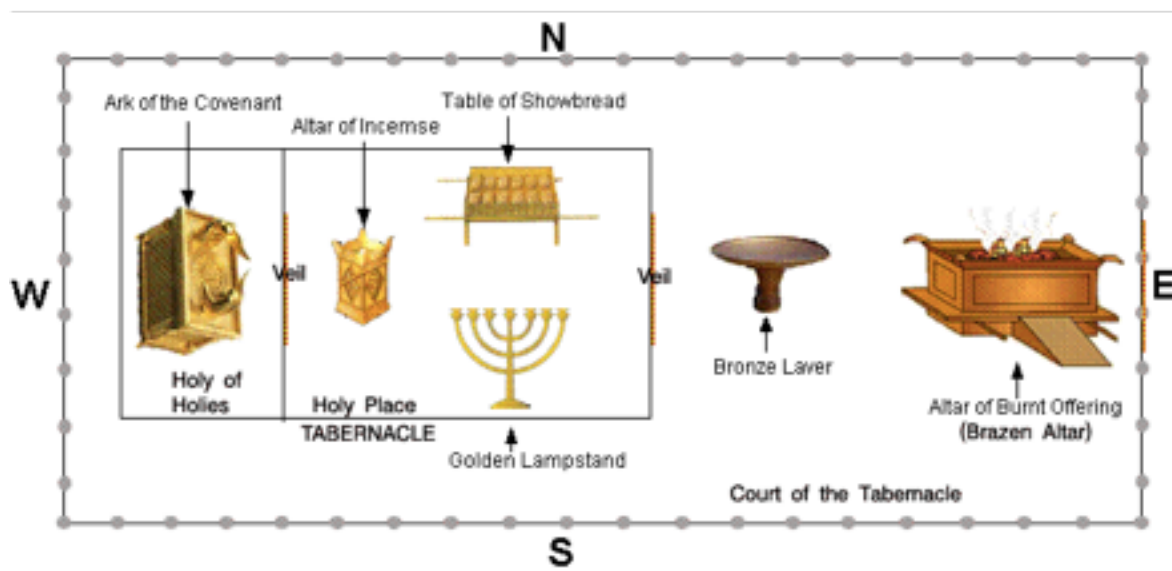
The Table of Show Bread represents Christ—Exodus 40:4, Matthew 28:20

The Altar of Incense represents worship, Exodus 30:1-10, Revelation 8:3

The Second Veil represents our entrance to God through Christ—Hebrews 10:19-21

The Holy of Holies represents heaven—Exodus 26:33, Hebrews 9:24

The Mercy Seat (top of the Ark) could only be approached by the High Priest once a year, Christ now approaches forever as our High Priest—1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 4:14-16



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Lesson Four: The Laws of Sacrifice (Part 1)

Leviticus 1:1-7:38



The bulk of Israelite worship was in the form of sacrifices. The first sacrifices mentioned in the Bible were the offerings of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). Noah took seven of each clean animal on the ark probably for the purposes of food and sacrifice (Genesis 7:1-3). Upon departing the ark, Noah offered up burnt offerings to God (Genesis 8:20-22). The sacrificial form of worship continued throughout the history of God's people. It was not until the time of Christ that the animal sacrifices ceased, for Christ became our sacrifice (Hebrews 9:27-28).

This lesson will cover what is commonly referred to as the Levitical Offerings. These are the sacrifices which were brought to the Priests (Levites) to be offered to God. As with everything else we have covered, these were to follow a precise pattern; no detail being neglected. Next lesson we will concentrate on the scapegoat and make a strong application to the sacrifice of Christ.

Basically, there were five offerings that were to be/could be made. Three of these were voluntary, while the remaining two were compulsory. We will take a close look at each of these looking at the purpose and contents of each offering. We will also study who got what portion of each offering, and examine the prophetic significance of each.

Burnt Offering (Hebrew – Olah)

This offering is discussed in Leviticus 1:1-17 and 6:8-13. This was a voluntary offering and provided a sweet aroma to God. It had a two-fold purpose: 1) To atone for sin in general (Leviticus 1:4); and 2) To signify complete dedication to God. The contents of the offering were according to the wealth of the offerer. A wealthy person would offer a bull without blemish (Leviticus 1:3-9). Those less fortunate could offer either a male sheep or goat without blemish (Leviticus 1:10-13), or turtle doves or young pigeons (Leviticus 1:14-17). God's portion was to be entirely burned on the altar (Leviticus 1:9) except for the skin, which was given to the priest (Leviticus 7:8). The offerer received no portion of this sacrifice.

The burnt offering seems to signify a life of complete dedication to God. The phrase “whole burnt offering” is important (see Psalm 51:19). It signifies complete dedication not only on the part of the believer (Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 13:15), but also on the part of Christ (Matthew 26:39-44, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, Philippians 2:5-11).

Grain Offerings (Hebrew – Minah)

The grain offering accompanied the burnt offering. Like the burnt offering, it was a voluntary and a sweet aroma to God. It is discussed in Leviticus 2:1-16, 6:14-18 and 7:12-13. It's purpose was one of thanksgiving, and consisted of three types. First, it could be of fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense (Leviticus 2:1-3). Second, it could be of cakes made with fine flour, mixed with oil, and baked in an oven, a pan, or covered pan (Leviticus 2:4-7). Third, green (unripe) heads of grain could be roasted and mixed with oil and frankincense (Leviticus 1:14-15). The offerer received no portion of this offering. God's portion consisted of a memorial portion which was to be burned on the altar (Leviticus 2:2, 9, 16). The priest was then to eat the remainder of the offering in the court of the tabernacle (Leviticus 2:3, 10; 6:16-18, 7:14-15).

Notes

[illegible]

***For the life of the flesh
is in the blood, and I
have given it to you
upon the altar to make
atonement for your
souls; for it is the blood
that makes atonement
for the soul.'***

Leviticus 17:11

We can see in this offering a foreshadowing of the sinless humanity of Christ. The absence of leaven would typify his sinlessness (Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5), while the oil might represent the presence of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 4:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

The Peace Offering (Hebrew – Shelem)

This is the final of the voluntary and sweet-smelling offerings (Leviticus 3:1-17; 7:11-21, 28-34). It expressed, in the form of thanksgiving, the peace and fellowship that existed between God and the offerer. It consisted of three types of offerings, and ended in a communal meal. The first type of offering was the thank offering and expressed gratitude for God for an unexpected blessing. The second type was in the form of a votive offering. This expressed gratitude to God for blessings received as the result of the successful keeping of a vow. The third type was a free will offering. This offering was one of general thanksgiving.

As with the burnt offering, the contents of these offerings were according to wealth. The wealthiest offered a male or female from the herd without blemish (Leviticus 3:1-5). Those less wealthy could offer an unblemished male or female from the flocks (Leviticus 3:6-11), and the extremely impoverished could offer a male goat (Leviticus 3:12-17). If the offering was a freewill offering of a bull or a lamb, minor imperfections were permitted (Leviticus 22:23).

This is the first, and only, offering in which the offerer received a portion. This obviously symbolized the fellowship between God and man. God received the fatty portions burned on the altar (Leviticus 3:3-5). The priests received the breast (called a wave offering) and the right thigh (called a heave offering) (Leviticus 7:30-34). The remainder of the thank offering was to be eaten by the offerer and his family the same day as the offering (Leviticus 7:15). The remainder of the votive and freewill offerings were eaten on the same and following days (Leviticus 7:16-18). The peace offerings foreshadow the peace we have with God through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1, Col 1:20).

Sin Offering (Hebrew – Hattat)

This is the first of the compulsory offerings. It is also one of only two which the Lord did not consider to be a sweet aroma. The scripture references for the sin offering are Leviticus 4:1-5:13 and 6:24-30. The sin offering was made to atone for sins unknowingly committed, and where no restitution was possible (see Numbers 15:30-31). This offering availed nothing if the sin was an open rebellion against God.

The sin offering could be one of six things. First, if the offering was for the High Priest, the offering had to be a bull without blemish (Leviticus 4:3-12). Second, if the offering was for the congregation, it had to be a bull without blemish (Leviticus 4:13-21). Third, if for a ruler, the offering was to be a male goat without blemish (Leviticus 4:22-26). Fourth, a commoner's offering consisted of a female goat or lamb without blemish (Leviticus 4:27-35). Fifth, in cases of poverty, two turtledoves or young pigeons could be substituted. One was for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering (Leviticus 5:7-10). Sixth, if the offerer was in extreme poverty, fine flour could be substituted (Lev 5:11-13).

God's portion of these offerings consisted of the fatty portions burned on the altar (Leviticus 4:8-10). If the sin offering was made for the High Priest or the congregation, the remainder of the sin offering was burned outside the camp (Leviticus 4:11ff). The priests received only the remainder of the sin offering of a ruler or commoner. It was to be eaten in the court of the Tabernacle (Leviticus 6:26). The sin offering represents two aspects of the death of Christ: First, that Christ was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Second, that Christ suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem (outside the camp) (Hebrews 13:11-13).

Trespass Offering (Hebrew – 'asham)

This offering was compulsory and non-sweet. It was to atone for sins committed unknowingly where restitution was possible (Leviticus 5:14-6:7, 7:1-7). If the offense were committed against God, then a ram without blemish was to be offered, and restitution made. The amount of restitution was estimated by the priest plus one-fifth (Leviticus 5:15-16). If the offense was against a man, a ram without blemish was offered and restitution made according to the value of the trespass plus one-fifth (Leviticus 6:4-6). God's portion was the fatty parts burned on the altar (Leviticus 7:3-5) with the remainder consumed by the priests in a holy place (Leviticus 7:6-7). This offering also foreshadows the fact that Christ became our trespass offering (Colossians 2:13).

Other Offerings

There are several other offerings which were to be made on occasion, or according to certain circumstances. These other offerings included: offerings following childbirth (Leviticus 12); offerings following cleansing of leprosy (Leviticus 13-14); offerings made for cleansing following the secretion of semen or the menstrual period (Leviticus 15). There are other offerings mentioned in Leviticus as well. There are also strict guidelines for the type of animal used, how the animal was killed, and how it was to be divided (for example read Leviticus 22:17-30).

The overwhelming lesson in all of this is God's requirement for worship. Jesus stressed that God must be worshipped in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Here, we see a very complicated regimen of worship. God still requires our worship be in a certain way, but thanks be to God that our worship becomes acceptable through Christ; the blood of animals no longer being necessary (Hebrews 10:4).

A statue of Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a brown robe. He is holding a large stone tablet (the Ten Commandments) in his left hand and pointing his right hand towards the sky. The statue is standing on a dark, textured base.

Day of Atonement Leviticus 16:1-34, 23:26-32, Numbers 29:7-1

“For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins.”
Leviticus 16:30

The word “confess” is a very interesting word that is used in two basic ways in the New Testament. First, we are to confess Christ, “Whoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). Second it is used to refer to our acknowledging that we are sinners. “Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). The word “confess” is from a Greek word which means to “say alike,” or to “speak the same thing.” For example, when the Bible states that Jesus is the Christ, we are to speak the same thing as the Bible. In other words, we confess that Jesus is the Christ. When we find the Bible, or some spiritual person (see Galatians 6:1), accusing us of wrong-doing, if we are guilty we should speak the same thing as they and admit our fault. The entire process of confession is one of recognition and humility. I recognize from the evidence presented that a thing is true. Therefore, I humble myself and confess to the accuracy of the transgression.

Confession is important for several reasons. First, confession is essential to salvation. Paul asserted as much in Romans 10:9-10. Second, confession places our names before the throne of God. Jesus promised that if we would confess him before men, he would confess us before God (Matthew 10:32). Third, confession leads to the forgiveness of sins as James implies in James 5:16. So, the old axiom is true—Confession is good for the soul.

We also cannot help but notice the symbolism and foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ. Here are some of the similarities:

1. The scapegoat bore no sin of his own—Christ was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21).
2. The scapegoat became a vessel for sin—Christ carried our sin to the cross (2 Cor 5:21, Isaiah 53:6).
3. The scapegoat was taken outside of the camp—Christ was taken outside of the gates (Hebrews 13:12).
4. The scapegoat was led by a “suitable man”—could this be a foreshadowing of Simon bearing the cross of Christ (i.e. a sinner leading the sacrifice to the atoning place, Matthew 27:32; or does the man more closely foreshadow Christ?).
5. After the scapegoat was lead away, Aaron and the one who led the scapegoat away had to cleanse themselves with water—Baptism? (1 Peter 3:21).

What a wonderful thought that God has always made provision for the forgiveness of sins! How wonderful it is to look back and see how God purposely prepared his people for the coming of his son by giving them a glimpse into the future! What a blessing it is for us to know that we do not have to repeat this process every year, but to know that Christ is our once and for all sacrifice for sin!

¹ Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. ²For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; ³and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, ⁴which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. ⁶Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. ⁷But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; ⁸the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--¹⁰concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. The Heavenly Sanctuary ¹¹But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come,^[a] with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹²Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:1-12)

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Lesson Six: The Priesthood and High Priest Various Places in Scripture



The leaders of Hebrew religious life were the priests; they were led by the High Priest. The priesthood was instituted by Moses at the command of God (see generally Exodus 28-29 and Leviticus 8-9). Those chosen as priests would be taken from the tribe of Levi; with the High Priest taken from the direct descendants of Aaron. The scriptures never specify the particular number of priests. Some believe that the priesthood was actually small in number. They point to Exodus 28:1: *"Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar."* This may indicate the original total number of priests, or it could be the roster of the first High Priests. Given the fact that what follows in Exodus 28 is a detailed description of the dress of the High Priest, we take the latter interpretation of Exodus 28:1. It appears that the number of priests varied. For example, David appointed 24 priests to serve the tabernacle during his reign as king of Israel.

We want to look at some of the details of the work of the priests and the High Priests. In particular, we will look at their qualifications and duties.

The Priesthood

A. Qualifications

The priesthood was vested in the tribe of Levi. The Levites could trace their origin to a common ancestor (see Genesis 49). Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah. The curse of Jacob on Levi (Genesis 34:25ff; 49:5ff) was turned into a blessing by Moses (Exodus 32:29, Deuteronomy 8-10). They were given no tribal inheritance in Canaan, but 48 cities were set aside for the Levites which included the six cities of refuge. There were three families within the Levites who had special duties at the tabernacle: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. It appears that most, if not all, of the priests were taken from the family of Kohath. The rest would assist at the tabernacle. Deuteronomy 33:8-10 indicates broadly that the priests were to minister at the altar, burn the sacrifices and teach the Law.

Besides being a descendant of Levi, which the priestly candidate had to prove by genealogy (Ezra 2:62), they also had to be without blemish. ¹⁷*Speak to Aaron, saying: "No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. ¹⁸For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, ¹⁹a man*

Notes

Memory Verse

who has a broken foot or broken hand,²⁰ or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.²¹ No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.²² He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy;²³ only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them." (Leviticus 21:17-23). The priesthood was sanctified to serve at the tabernacle (Exodus 29:44); and this was to be a perpetual statute (Exodus 27:21).

B. Duties

The following is a list (perhaps partial) of the God-given duties of the priesthood.

1. Keep the tabernacle Numbers 3:38 ³⁸Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, were Moses, Aaron, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel; but the outsider who came near was to be put to death.
2. Tend the lamp Exodus 27:20-21 ²⁰"And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. ²¹In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.
3. Tend the fire Leviticus 6:12-13 ¹²And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. ¹³A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.
4. Movement of the Tabernacle and furniture (Numbers 4:5-15)
5. Burning of incense Exodus 30:7-8 "Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. ⁸And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.
6. Offering sacrifices Leviticus 1:1-17
7. Bless the people Numbers 6:23-27 ²³"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, "This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: ²⁴"The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; ²⁶The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."
²⁷"So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."
8. Purify the unclean Leviticus 15:15-31
9. Diagnose leprosy Leviticus 13:2-59
10. Blowing trumpets Numbers 10:1-10
11. Teaching the Law Leviticus 10:11 ¹¹ that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

The Law of Moses

Lesson Seven: The High Priest



Qualifications

The role of High Priest was very important in the worship practices of the nation of Israel. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement each year (Leviticus 16).

The office of High Priest was a life-long appointment, and was assumed by the oldest qualified descendant of Aaron (Exodus 28:1). The office moved back and forth among two of the sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar. Jewish law stated that the High Priest must avoid ritual defilement (could not touch a dead body, tear his garments, or mourn publicly Leviticus 21:10ff), marry only an Israelite virgin, and not be born on foreign soil. According to rabbinical tradition, a High Priest had to be at least twenty years old.

As time passed on, the position of High Priests at times became corrupted. Eli allowed his children to do evil things in the Temple. And in the Days of Jesus Ananus and Caiaphus were well known for their duplicity.

Clothing

God spent an entire chapter in Exodus (Exodus 28) discussing the clothing of the High Priest. The text indicates that these garments were miraculously made (v. 3). There were six parts to these garments (ephod, breastplate, robe, tunic, turban and sash). Also included were two stones (the urim and thummim). These garments were made of fine linen and sewn together with gold, blue, purple and scarlet thread.

The ephod was a piece of clothing worn over the shoulders. It contained two onyx stones upon which were carved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (six names on each stone). The breastplate was constructed out of cloth and gold. It was made so that four rows of three stones could be mated to it. These twelve stones represented the twelve tribes of Israel. The first row contained a sardius (ruby?), topaz and emerald. The second row contained a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond. The third row contained a jacinth, agate and an amethyst. The fourth row contained a beryl, onyx and jasper. Inside the breastplate, next to the heart, were placed two stones. These stones were called the Urim and Thummin. These were used by God to communicate his will to the High Priest (See Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 14:41, 28:6, Ezra 2:63, et al.).

The robe was blue, and the crown (turban) contained an inscription reading, "Holiness to the Lord." The tunic was used to cover the Priest down to the ground. This garment was to be handed down generation after generation to the descendants of Aaron.

Notes

[illegible]

Memory Verse

***For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.
Hebrews 4:15***

Duties

It is probably true that the High Priest also performed many of the duties of the priests. However, the High Priest had particular duties that he alone performed. What follows is a list of those duties:

1. Offer gifts and sacrifices Hebrews 5:1 For every High Priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.
2. Make atonement Leviticus 16:1-34
3. Inquire of God 1 Samuel 23:9-12
4. Consecrate Levites Numbers 8:11-21, 2 Chronicles 19:11
5. Anoint kings 1 Kings 1:34

Jesus as High Priest

The New Testament speaks of Jesus in figurative terms as a "High Priest." Since he is our High Priest, he can satisfy God's judgment (Romans 3:24-28), he can pacify the wrath of God (Romans 5:9), he can justify the sinner (Romans 5:1) and sanctify the believer (1 Corinthians 1:30). He was not of the order of Aaron, but of Melchizedek. His priesthood is eternal (Hebrews 5:10). He has no need to offer sacrifice for his own sins, for he has no sin (Hebrews 7:27-28). He offered his own blood once for all people for all times (Hebrews 9:12, 16; 10:10, 12). Because of this, we may come boldly into the presence of God through Jesus Christ. *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The Priesthood of Believers

This phrase is a good description of the church. Since Christ is our eternal High Priest, we may go to the Father with our sacrifices through him (John 14:1-6). Peter tells us we are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Notice the following about the priesthood of believers:

1. It was predicted (Isaiah 61:4-6)
2. It includes all believers (Revelation 1:5-6)
3. They have access to God (Ephesians 2:18)
4. They are living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2)
5. They offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5)

The priesthood under the Law of Moses is a great teacher of the coming priesthood of believers and the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. The detail and ritualistic form of the Aaronic priesthood has now given way to the grace of God seen in the redemptive work of Christ.

A statue of Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a brown robe. He is holding a large stone tablet (the Ten Commandments) in his left hand and pointing upwards with his right hand. The statue is standing on a dark, textured base.

**Ex 21:12-14, Lev 24:17, Num 35:6-34,
Deut 4:41-43, 19:1-13**

Notes

[illegible]

Memory Verse

***Because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.
Numbers 35:28***

1. Kadesh: Located about fifteen miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the mountains which border the west side of the Hula Valley. This was in the area of Israel which was assigned to Naphtali.
2. Shechem: Located at the east end of the valley running between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. This was within a range called the hills of Ephraim, and was within the territory of Israel assigned to Ephraim.
3. Hebron: This city is also called Kirath-arba. It was located in Judah about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. It was from Hebron that David ruled the first seven years of his reign.
4. Bezer: this city was in the tribe of Reuben. It lay about twenty-five miles east of the place where the Jordan river emptied into the Dead Sea.
5. Ramoth: located about fifty miles north of Bezer within the tribe of Gad.
6. Golan: Its exact location is not known, but it was somewhere in the high country lying east of the Sea of Galilee within the tribe of Manasseh.

Exodus 21:14, states that a person who had killed someone willfully could find no sanctuary at the altar. This might imply that one who had accidentally killed another could find some shelter there. There is also the promise in Exodus 21:3 that God would eventually provide a more adequate system of

of protecting those who accidentally kill another.

The details of the law of the cities of refuge are discussed in Numbers 35:6-34. This arrangement changed the responsibility of avenging the accidental death of a person from the avenger of blood to the congregation at large. The passage gives a great deal of detail in distinguishing between willful murder and an accidental death. A death would be considered accidental if there was no premeditation or anger involved. God makes it plain that if one is guilty of willful murder, he may be put to death by the avenger of blood.

If the death was accidental, then the congregation was to determine if the death was by accident or willful murder. If it was determined that the death was accidental, then the "manslayer" was to be delivered by the congregation to the city of refuge. The manslayer was required to remain there until the death of the current High Priest. The Law of Moses did not provide for a sacrifice to remove the guilt of the manslayer. Therefore, only the death of the High Priest could remove this guilt. Once at the city of refuge, Deuteronomy 19:1-13 says that the elders of that city were to take charge of the investigation, and determine again if the death was truly accidental or willful. If the determination was made that the death was accidental, then the manslayer could gain entrance into the city. If the manslayer left the confines of the city of refuge before the death of the High Priest, then the avenger of blood could avenge the death of his family member.

It was only during the period of the United Kingdom that all six cities of refuge were under the control of the Hebrews so that they could function as planned. During the remainder of Hebrew history, only Shechem and Hebron were under Hebrew control until they were destroyed in 722 B.C. and 587 B.C. respectively.

There is a New Testament application to this principle. Just as the cities of refuge were havens from the avenger of blood, the church is a haven for Christians from the spiritual avenger of blood, Satan. In the church we are protected as children of God. We are given the assurance that Satan cannot tempt us above our abilities to withstand him (1 Corinthians 10:13). It provides us with the means to face the wiles of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:10-20). The church is without doubt our spiritual city of refuge.

There is another application. Symbolism may be a better word. A simple reading of the text reveals that this principle of Hebrew law was strictly civil in nature. There is no mention of worship, sacrifice or prayers. It shows us that God provided for his people in both religious and civil areas. Today, mankind has been given God's permission to govern his own affairs (Romans 13:1-7). Therefore, we have a refuge in our own government. We can appeal to it for justice and mercy in a physical sense. This is exactly what Paul was doing when he appealed to Rome (Acts 25:11).

Capital Punishment

As part of the Law of Moses, God instructs Moses that there were certain crimes which could be punished by death. These offenses constituted the grossest violations of God's law, and also violated humanity's own sense of morality. Today, many people (if not most) would find some of these too insignificant to warrant the death penalty. However, this demonstrates to us the high standards of conduct to which God's people are called. Israel had received many blessings from God's hand, and "to him who much is given, of him much shall be required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask more" (Luke 12:48).

Crimes for which the death penalty was allowed included:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Premeditated murder Ex 21:12-23 | 2. Kidnapping Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7 |
| 3. Striking or cursing parents Ex 21:15, Lev 20:9 | 4. Magic or divination Exodus 22:18 |
| 5. Bestiality Ex 22:19, Lev 20:15-16 | 6. Sacrificing to false gods, Exodus 22:20 |
| 7. Profaning the Sabbath Ex 35:2, Num 15:32-36 | 8. Offering human sacrifices, Leviticus 20:2 |
| 9. Adultery Lev 20:10-21, Deut 22:22 | 10. Incest, Leviticus 20:11-14 |
| 11. Homosexuality Leviticus 20:13 | 12. Blasphemy, Leviticus 24:11-13 |
| 13. False prophecy Deuteronomy 13:1-10 | 14. Rebelliousness, Deut 17:21, 21:18-21 |
| 15. Fornication Deuteronomy 22:20-21 | 16. Rape Deuteronomy 22:23-27 |

Of course, Romans 13:4 states that the civil government bears a sword, and not in vain. Does this mean that God requires capital punishment, or merely allows capital punishment to be used? We think the latter to be the case. There is nothing in Romans 13 which would indicate that the death penalty is required. However, the fact that the government does not bear the sword in vain indicates that God allows the government to choose the form of punishment that it sees fit the crime.

The Law of Moses

Lesson Nine: Israel's Sacred Times Leviticus 23



Under the Law of Moses, Israel had many times to ceremonially remember the Lord and his work. These days were designed as teaching tools for the children and also as times for the Israelites to live out their faith. The Hebrew people counted time by a lunar calendar so sometimes the dating of the feast days will seem strange to our Western mind.

Of foremost importance to the Israelites was the keeping of the Sabbath Day (Exodus 23:8-11). The keeping of the Sabbath was a memorial of the Covenant between Israel and God, Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:15. It was to be a day of rest and reflection for God's people. Each seventh year, the Israelites celebrated the Sabbath year (Exodus 23:10-11). This was an entire year where crops would not be planted and the fields would lie fallow. Celebrating this year was a huge act of faith for an agrarian society. Finally each seventh, seventh Sabbath year (every 50 years) was called a Year of Jubilee, Leviticus 25:8-13. On this year, all debts would be cancelled, slaves would be set free, and ownership of land would be returned to its original owners. This ultimate restart or restoration would show God's healing power to his people.

Israel's Feast Days

Much of the Old Law revolved around celebrating the holiness of the Lord and remembering the good things he had done for his people. This remembrance centered around a series of days that the Lord celebrated as holy. In addition to keeping of the Sabbath each week, there were nineteen days (grouped into seven feasts) which were considered national holidays.

The Passover, Leviticus 23:4-8 (Also called Feast of Unleavened Bread)
The basic instructions for this feast day are found in Exodus 12:16-19. This feast goes back to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, when the death angel "passed over" the Israelites as he struck dead many of the Egyptians. The feast looked back at the tenth plague when each home was commanded to kill and eat a lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The feast then continued by each person doing no ordinary work on the first day, avoiding leavened bread for seven days, and giving a food offering to the Lord. Jesus is seen in this feast through his blood covering our sins as God's perfect lamb and protecting us from spiritual death, Ephesians 1:7.

Notes

Memory Verse

***"For whatever things
were written before were
written for our learning,
that we through the
patience and comfort of
the Scriptures might
have hope."***

Romans 15:4

The First Fruits, Leviticus 23:9-14

The background for this feast is found in Exodus 23:15 and 34:18-20. Similar to our modern day Thanksgiving, this feast was celebrated as the harvest came in. The first crops would be waved by the priests before the Lord and then a series of offerings were given: burnt offering (gratitude for the livestock), grain offering (gratitude for the crops), and a drink offering (gratitude for the grapes to make wine). The keeping of this feast dedicated and celebrated the harvest as a blessing from the Lord. Jesus is seen in this feast in that he is the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:20.

The Weeks or Pentecost, Leviticus 23:15-22

Seven full weeks (50 days) after the previous offering, a celebration occurred among God's people to recognize the Lord as the provider of all crops and harvests. It was a day to thank the Lord for his graciousness and to share his blessings with others, Leviticus 23:22. Jesus is seen in this feast (Acts 2) as he provides our salvation from the result of his work for us.

The Trumpets, Leviticus 23:23-25

The trumpet blasts and assembly on the first day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar called the people together for the most sacred month. The feast marked the end of the agricultural year and the beginning of another. The calling of the people harkens back to Jesus' call to all those who seek him, Matthew 11:28-30.

The Day of Atonement, Leviticus 23:26-32

Described in more detail in Leviticus 16:29-34, this day focused on the people's sin. Being the only day the Israelites were commanded to fast each year, ritual mourning was conducted as the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle to atone for sins. This feast shows Jesus' work as he atones for our sins today, Hebrews 4:15.

The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths), Leviticus 23:33-36

For this week, the nation of Israel would live in tents to commemorate the time spent in the wilderness. Celebrating the people's freedom from Egypt and God's guidance, they ceased from their work for seven days and spent the time in worship to the Lord. This feast has a New Testament connotation in that Jesus tabernacled among us (John 1:14) and we too are only pilgrims on a journey to the Land of Promise, 1 Peter 2:11

It is interesting to note how each Feast Day celebrated by Israel looks to a portion of Christ's work for us. As we view the Passover (Christ's saving us), the First Fruits (Christ's Resurrection), the Day of Pentecost (Christ's blessings given to us), the Trumpets (the message of salvation given to all mankind), the Day of Atonement (Christ's Sacrifice for us) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Christ dwelling among us), we see that God's plan of salvation was designed before the beginning of the world.

Under God's New Covenant we no longer have feast days as they did under the Law of Moses. However, we do still have many memorials used to remind us of God's work and to use in teaching children and new converts. Baptism is a memorial of our joining Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, Romans 6:1-4. As the believer engages in baptism he is added to the Lord's body and his immersion serves as a teaching tool and reminder of what Christ has done for us. Each Lord's Day, all believers take of the unleavened bread which represents Christ's body which was broken on the cross for our salvation. We then take of the fruit of the vine, which represents Christ's blood that was shed for the remission of our sins, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

The Law of Moses

Lesson Ten: Israel's Dietary and Cleanliness Laws Leviticus 11, 15, 17, 20



The Law of Moses had many regulations concerning what a person could eat, how they had to treat one another, and how they dealt with many aspects of their daily lives. The purpose of these regulations was to emphase the uniqueness and holiness of God's people among the nations, Leviticus 11:44-45, 20:24-26.

Dietary Law

Of all animals that lived on land, only those which have split hoofs and chew the cud may be eaten. Deuteronomy describes this and then gives a list of acceptable animals: the ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, roebuck, the wild goat, ibex, antelope, mountain sheep, and others. Animals that possess only one of the two required traits are deemed unclean and unacceptable for food. Among these animals are the camel, rock badger, the rabbit, and the pig.

Among creatures in the water, both fins and scales are required in order to be acceptable for food. Among the birds, no specific requirements are given to separate the clean from the unclean. But prohibited birds include the eagle, vulture, kite, falcon, raven, ostrich, sea gull, owls, pelicans, storks, heron, and the bat. Almost all birds prohibited are birds of prey. Among the insects, everything that moves on the ground is prohibited (Leviticus 11:20-22). But insects that have jointed feet to jump or that can fly are allowed. These include crickets, grasshoppers, and locusts. These regulations eliminate most insects, as well as reptiles, amphibians, worms, and mice as potential foods.

The Bible not only regulates what kinds of food the Israelites may eat, it also regulates which parts of the acceptable animals may be eaten. The sciatic nerve, the fat, and the blood are all prohibited as food to the Israelites. The reason for the sciatic nerve being prohibited is listed in Genesis 32:2-3 back to when Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord. The prohibition to eating fat does not refer to fatty parts of meat, but to the fatty areas around the liver, kidneys and entrails. And the reason for the blood prohibition is that the life of an animal was considered to be in the blood, Leviticus 17:11. In addition to this, an Israelite was prohibited from eating meat that did not die in an acceptable manner such as a natural death or being killed by a beast. Only animals that died from slaughter or hunting could be consumed.

There have been many attempts to explain why God had such strict dietary laws for his people. Many today look at the health benefits of eating certain kinds of animals rather than others, yet in the ancient world cooking practices were fairly advanced and there is no evidence that the Israelites had

Notes

Memory Verse

"For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy..."
Leviticus 17:44

a healthier lifestyle or longer life than the Gentiles around them. Others will point to certain dietary regulations which seem to prohibit practices that were rooted in pagan worship. While this could be the case in some instances, the laws concerning food seem to go beyond the banning of idolatrous practices. However, regardless of the reason why, these dietary laws were very effective in creating a distinction between the Israelite and the Gentile. Modern archeologist today can often prove whether a city was inhabited by Israelites or others based on the food remnants which were left behind by the people.

Laws of Cleanliness

A basic principle of uncleanness was protection from contagiousness and relief for those undergoing a medical procedure. If a person went to an unclean house, or touched anything unclean, he was considered to be unclean for a period of time. If a person touched a dead body, or if a sick animal came into contact with any household object, that person or thing became unclean.

People who engaged in sexual sin were considered to be unclean. Also those who engaged in sexual activity (Leviticus 15:18), women who gave birth to children were unclean for a period of time (Leviticus 12:1-8), and women who were menstruating were considered to be ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:19-23). Any sexual disease also required a period of uncleanness (Leviticus 15:13-15). When speaking of uncleanness concerning menstruation and child birth it is important to note that uncleanness is not the equivalent to sinfulness. A person being unclean meant they could not worship in the tabernacle or had to refrain from certain activities for a while. It often was considered to be a natural part of life and certain times of ritual uncleanness were to be expected.

Various skin diseases also caused uncleanness. If a sore was more than skin deep and the hair turned white, the person was unclean (Leviticus 13:3, etc). When a person appeared before a priest for examination and that person did not appear to be contagious, he would then be declared clean. Similarly, mildew in clothing or in a house required cleaning and sometimes destruction if removal was impossible. These laws concerning skin diseases protected the nation of Israel from many of the plagues of leprosy and other issues which would often afflict neighboring nations.

Relationship Laws

Inheritance was usually through the father of the family. When a father passed, his possessions would often be divided by the number of his children (usually sons) plus one. Then the property would be divided by the casting of lots with the oldest son receiving a double portion. The purpose of this method was to retain the property among the people to whom it was given as an inheritance by the Lord, and to provide each son an opportunity to provide for himself.

The citizens of Israel were in many ways defined by their heritage. A young boy's home, career, and duty to God was often determined by the tribe and family within that tribe to which he belonged. This created great importance on the father or the leader of the family to raise up his sons and to give them a proper inheritance. When a father died without an heir, the wife was in danger of being left destitute. She could return to her father's home but the Law of Moses gave another recommendation: Levirate marriage. Mandated in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, the oldest brother of a deceased man who had no heir was obligated to marry the widow of his deceased brother, with the first born child being treated as an heir the deceased brother.

The Law of Moses

Lesson Eleven: The Price of Murmuring

Ex 16:1-36, Nm 1:1-35, Ex 17:1-7, Nm 20:1-13, 12:1-16, 21:1-9



The final three lessons of this study will center on certain events connected with the wanderings of the children of Israel. This lesson will look at four events in which the children of Israel are punished because of their murmurings and complaints against God and/or Moses. We will try to examine these in some detail, explain the circumstances surrounding each event, and then give a New Testament application to each story.

Manna From Heaven, Exodus 16:1-36, Numbers 11:1-35

There are two stories concerning the miraculous rain of manna from heaven. In Exodus 16, the children of Israel are two months out of Egypt. They begin to accuse Moses and Aaron of bringing them into the wilderness only to die of hunger. They recall that in Egypt, at least, they had plenty to eat. God, without Moses' intercession on behalf of the Israelites, tells Moses that He will rain manna from heaven. God also states that he will prepare a test for the Israelites in order to see "whether they will walk in my law, or not."

The test was simple: they were to gather bread every morning for five days. On the sixth day, they were to gather twice as much and prepare the extra for consumption on the Sabbath Day. When they had gathered enough for each day, the command of God was to eat all of it that day, and leave none. The exception was on the sixth day, when enough was prepared and set aside for the Sabbath. There was a small bonus. At twilight on the first day, a great draught of quail came and provided the Israelites with meat. The next morning, the Israelites noticed upon the ground "a small round thing, as small as the morning frost on the ground." When they asked Moses what the substance was, he explained, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."

Moses also warned them that they were to eat everything they gathered. Anything left would be infested with worms and have a vile smell by morning. This was a test of their faith in God that he would supply their needs. Some showed a lack of faith, and Moses became angry with them. What was not gathered melted in the heat of the day. On the Sabbath day, just as God had commanded, there was no manna to be found. However, several went and tried to gather manna. This time, God displayed his anger with the Israelites. The children of Israel named this bread like substance manna. It had the color of white coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. As the chapter closes, we are told that this procedure was followed the forty years they wandered in the wilderness.

The passage cited from Numbers 11 takes place several years later. The children of Israel have grown tired of the food God has been providing, and once more long for the food they ate while in Egypt. This complaining once again rouses the anger of God and Moses. Moses becomes so distraught with the Israelites that he begs God to take his life. God, however, has other plans. He tells the children of Israel that they will be sorry that they complained. In fact, he will give them so much meat that it will become loathsome to them. Please take note this is to be a punishment, not a pleasure. Their great crime was asserting that they wished they had never left Egypt.

Notes

Memory Verse

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. "

1 Cor. 10:12-13

God sends a great flock of quail to the camp. Many gather the quail and begin to eat. However, God also sends a great plague upon the camp, and many die. Those that died were said to have “lusted” for Egypt, and not for the good things of God. The place was named Kibroth Hattaavah.

God will not let his children hunger. In the wilderness, he satisfied their physical hunger. He promises his children today that they will also find this need fulfilled (Mt 6:31-33, Ps 37:25). God also fulfills our spiritual needs as well (Mt 5:6, Jn 6:3-51). This story shows us that God is concerned for our physical welfare, and will see to it that we are satisfied. It also demonstrates to us that we should place our faith in God that he will keep his promise.

Water From the Rock, Exodus 15:22-27, 17:1-7, Numbers 20:1-13

How quickly they forgot! In Exodus 15:22-27, the children of Israel had found some water, but it was bitter. God showed Moses a certain tree, which, when cast into the water, made it palatable. God then said: “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give your ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases on you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord God who heals you.” (Exodus 15:26).

How quickly they forgot! Just a short time later, the children of Israel once again complained, telling Moses, “Give us water that we may drink.” Moses tried to reason with them, telling them they were tempting God. But Moses feared for his life. God listened to Moses. To demonstrate his power, God took Moses to a rock in Horeb. Upon the command of God, Moses struck the rock with his rod, and water came forth. The place was named Massah.

How quickly they forgot! Once more, they show a complete lack of faith, and in Numbers 20:2-3, they again complain about their situation. This time, Moses is commanded to speak to the rock. Perhaps out of frustration, Moses tells the congregation that “we” would provide for them. At that point, Moses strikes the rock twice. Water came from the rock, but Moses had sinned. It was disbelief on the part of Moses that led to this sin. Moses’ punishment was that we would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land once they reached it.

Again we see God’s great love and concern for his people as he provides for their well being. Once again, their all too short memories turn them against him. Behold the longsuffering of God! God provides for us in so many ways! In a spiritual sense, we have been given living waters when once tasted, we never thirst again (John 4:6-14). Both of these stories show us that we may totally rely on God to supply all of our needs. We, in our finite human thinking, might not have provided the same thing in the same way. We must remember the words of Isaiah: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

The Sin of Miriam and Aaron, Numbers 12:1-16

Miriam and Aaron were the sister and brother of Moses. For some reason, they did not approve of the Ethiopian woman Moses had married. More precisely, they were jealous of Moses’ position as God’s spokesman, and attacked Moses’ wife. God heard their grumbling. We then see Moses was the meekest man on earth.

In order to vindicate the position held by Moses, God calls Moses, Aaron and Miriam to the tabernacle. God then states that while he would speak to a prophet in dreams and visions, he speaks to Moses face to face. Therefore, we must conclude, Moses was greater than any prophet. God then asks Miriam and Aaron why, knowing this, they dared to speak against Moses. The implication is plain: to speak against Moses was to speak against God. God’s anger is demonstrated by striking Miriam with leprosy. It is here that the meekness of Moses comes into the picture. In Numbers 12:11-13, Moses begs for Miriam. He pleads with God to heal her. God agrees to heal her, but only after she has been put out of the camp for seven days.

We cannot expect to speak unjustly against God or his servants and remain righteous in his sight. The scriptures speak of the beauty of the feet of God’s servants (Rm 10:15). John chastised Diotrephes for his impeding the work of God’s servants (3 Jn 9-11). By contrast, God’s children are not to strike back at those who falsely accuse them (Rm 12:21, 1 Thess 5:15). Meekness should characterize the children of God (Mt 5:5, Gal 5:22-23).

The Bronze Serpent, Numbers 21:1-9

This is one of the best known stories of the Old Testament. Once more, it begins with Israel complaining about being in the wilderness with no food or water. God does not wait for Moses to come to him. Instead God sends serpents among the Israelites. Many are bitten and die as a result. We can see that the Israelites are beginning to learn a lesson in repentance, for they come to Moses confessing their sins, and beg him to ask God to remove the serpents. God instructs Moses to construct a serpent out of bronze, and place it on a pole where the entire camp can see it. Those bitten by the serpents were instructed to look upon the bronze serpent and they would be healed. This serpent was preserved until the time of Hezekiah. Hezekiah had it broken into pieces because it had become an idol to the people of Judah (2 Kings 18:1-4).

This bronze serpent became a foreshadowing of the crucifixion of Christ. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15). “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (Jn 12:32).

A statue of Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a brown robe. He is holding a large stone tablet (the Ten Commandments) in his left hand and pointing his right hand towards the sky. The statue is standing on a dark, textured base.

Leviticus 10:1-11, Numbers 13:1-14:39, 16:1-50, 22:1-24:25

Notes

We may forget that the children of Israel reached the Land of Canaan rather quickly. They were camped ready to go into the land, when God instructed Moses to send twelve spies into the land. This reconnoitering expedition was to “see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell in it, whether they are strong or weak, few or many, and what the land is that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong hands, and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, and whether the land is wooded or not.” Numbers 13:18-20

These twelve spies enter Canaan, and remain there forty days. On their return, the Israelites are anxious to know if it is possible to take the land. The twelve spies give the following report: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit. Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan." Numbers 13:27-29 This report greatly upset the Israelites. Caleb, joined by Joshua, is finally able to restore order and boldly declares, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." Numbers 13:30 Joshua and Caleb were so certain of victory because of the fact that God was on the side of the Israelites.

The people, however, were unconvinced. After being assured that giants inhabited the land and the children of Israel would be to them as insects, the children of Israel decided to rebel against God. They decide to overthrow Moses, elect a new leader, and return to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb plead with them to take God's word and demonstrate their faithfulness in the promise of God. This so enrages the people that they move to stone Joshua and Caleb. The glory of God appears at the door of the tabernacle; apparently ready to destroy the congregation. As he has done so many times in the past, Moses intercedes on behalf of the faithless Israelites. He concludes by praying, "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of your mercy, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Numbers 14:19 God agrees to pardon them, but he will also punish them so that his glory may be known throughout the earth. God tells them that they have tempted him ten times, and because of their rebellious spirit, none of the adults will enter the Promised Land except for Joshua and Caleb. They are sentenced to wander for forty years; enough time for that generation to die, and the next one to mature. The only exception is that the ten unfaithful spies die immediately.

The lesson here is the necessity of faithfulness. The odds may seem overwhelming and insurmountable, but God's people will endure. Listen to the words of the New Testament: Matthew 17:20, Matthew 19:26, Luke 1:37, and Matthew 16:18.

The Rebellion of Balak and Balaam, Numbers 22:1-24:25

Balaam is summoned by Balak, the Moabite, to help defeat the Israelites. At first, Balaam will not go because God will not allow it. Later, God instructs Balaam to go to Balak, but only if men come for him. Evidently, they didn't, but Balaam went anyway. God wanted to teach Balaam a lesson. While riding his donkey, the animal sees the angel of the Lord. The donkey then turns to avoid the angel. Balaam strikes the donkey. Again the donkey sees the angel of the Lord, and falls against a wall. Balaam again strikes the donkey. The third time the donkey sees the angel, she lays down. Balaam then gets up and beats the donkey. At this point, God opens the mouth of the donkey. She asks Balaam why he is abusing her. Balaam's anger is such that he desires to kill the donkey. God then allows him to see the angel. The angel reminds Balaam that if the donkey had not turned away, Balaam and the donkey would have been killed. Balaam gets the point: nothing will thwart the plans of God.

Balaam is told to go on, but he will be able to speak only what God wants him to say. He tries three times to curse Israel, but can only speak blessings. When Balak dismisses Balaam, he speaks one more time. This time, he speaks of the Almighty God, and issues this prophecy, "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob; a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult." Numbers 24:17 There are two possible fulfillments of this prophecy: It either refers to David or to Christ. Given other verses in the New Testament in which Christ is referred to as the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2), and the root and offspring of David (Revelation 22:16), we believe this is a prophecy of Christ.

These three stories show the price of being rebellious to God and his commands. No one rebellious to God can escape his wrath. This is true even when the intention may be good, but the command was clear. It did not matter that Nadab and Abihu were trying to worship God. Balaam could not escape even though he was not an Israelite. What chance have we to escape God's wrath if we are rebellious to him? "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22)

The Law of Moses

Lesson Thirteen: Ratification of the Covenant and Moses' Final Words: The Book of Deuteronomy



Occasion of Deuteronomy

The generation that experienced the Exodus had finally died off (except for Joshua and Caleb) and Moses had led the new generation of Israel from wandering in the wilderness to the Plains of Moab. This new generation had not experienced the Ten Plagues of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, or heard the law given at Sinai. And now they were about to enter a new land with many dangers and temptations. The Book of Deuteronomy (meaning “second law”) was given to remind them of God’s law and God’s power.

This book was written at the end of the forty years of wandering endured by the nation of Israel. At the time the people were camped on the east side of the Jordan River, on the plains of Moab, across from the mighty city of Jericho, Deuteronomy 1:1, 29:1. They were on the verge of entering the land that had been promised centuries earlier to their forefathers (Genesis 12:1, 6-9). But before they could take possession of the land, they needed to renew the Covenant that the Lord had made with their fathers through Moses. The covenant, which had been broken by the Exodus generation had to be renewed by this new generation. Thus Moses leads the people through a covenant renewal ceremony that will not be completed until Israel crosses the Jordan River and declares the covenant blessings and curses from the top of Mount Ebal (chapters 27-30).

Deuteronomy is primarily a group of sermons delivered by Moses during the forty day period prior to Israel’s entering the Promised Land. The first sermon was delivered on the first day of the eleventh month (1:3), and the Israelites crossed the Jordan seventy days later, on the tenth day of the first month (Joshua 4:19). When the thirty-day mourning period is subtracted after Moses’s death (Deuteronomy 34:8), it leaves forty days used for this book. Since God did not permit Moses to enter the Land of Promises with Israel, his death had to take place (34:1-7) along with the orderly transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua (31:1-8, 14-21, 34:9).

Notes

Memory Verse

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”
Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Overview of the Book of Deuteronomy

To the modern, Western mind, the Book of Deuteronomy appears to be a review of the laws and narrative of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. However, modern archeology has given numerous examples that show the structure of Deuteronomy follows the pattern of a covenant or treaty made between a King and his people or a conquered nation. Viewed in this way, the book has an outline of preamble (1:1-5), historical context of the need for a treaty (1:6-4:43), responsibilities of the vassal nation to fulfill covenant (4:44-26:15), and ratifications along with consequences of obedience and rebellion (26:16-30:20), and provisions of how to renew the covenant (31:1-34:12).

The Israelites are commanded to remember four things in Deuteronomy: God's faithfulness, God's holiness, God's blessings, and God's warnings. The first three chapters retell the journey from Egypt to their current location, Moab. Chapter 4 is a call to obedience, to be faithful to the God who was faithful to them. Chapters 5 through 26 are a repetition of the law. The Ten Commandments, the laws concerning sacrifices and special days, and the rest of the law are given to the new generation. Blessings are promised to those who obey (5:29; 6:17-19; 11:13-15), and famine is promised to those who break the law (11:16-17).

The theme of blessing and cursing is continued in chapters 27-30. This portion of the book ends with a clear choice set before Israel: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." God's desire for His people is found in what He recommends: "choose life" (30:19). In the final chapters, Moses encourages the people; commissions his replacement, Joshua; records a song; and gives a final blessing to each of the tribes of Israel. Chapter 34 relates the circumstances of Moses' death. He climbed Mt. Pisgah, where the Lord showed him the Promised Land that he could not enter. At 120 years old, but still with good eyesight and the strength of youth, Moses died in the presence of the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy ends with a short obituary on this great prophet.

The Value of a Study of the Law of Moses

The Law of Moses was designed to create a people holy to God who would be a source of the Messiah to come into the world. Each part of the Old Law points to Christ. As the feast days and Cities of Refuge are closely examined, it is seen that each one of them point to an aspect of Christ's atoning work to redeem sinners. As the tabernacle and priesthood is studied, there is seen an analogy of the atoning work of Christ, the Son of God for his people. As the dietary and ceremonially cleansing laws are read, the need is seen for God's people to be holy and set apart from this world. So each part of the Old Law was preparatory in teaching the people to identify their Messiah, Galatians 3:24, 4:4.

However, it must also be remembered that the Old Law was intended for a specific people (the Nation of Israel, Deuteronomy 6:2-3, Nehemiah 8:1, Romans 7:7, and Colossians 2:14) for a specific time (from the time of Moses until Jesus' death on the cross). Today we are under the perfect Law of Christ found in the writings of the New Testament.