

A Holy People in the Presence of a Holy God

An Introduction to the book of Leviticus

Singapore Youth for Christ
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I. Introduction

A. Two General Questions

1. What characterises the church (and Christians) today?
 - a. Anthropocentric - The primary emphasis is all about me
 - b. Individual happiness is the chief pursuit of people
2. How should the church (and Christians) be characterised today?
 - a. Theocentric - The primary emphasis is God
 - b. Holiness is the chief pursuit of people

B. Two General Propositions

1. Leviticus is one of the most neglected, misused, and misunderstood books of the Bible.
 - a. Is an Old Testament book
 - b. Is no longer relevant for today
 - Relevance of the sacrificial system for today?
 - Relevance of the priestly system for today?
 - Relevance of purification rituals for today?
 - Cultural relevance of many of its requirements?
2. Leviticus is one of the most important books of the Bible.
 - a. 2 Tim 3:16-17
 - b. Central to the understanding of the rest of the Old Testament
 - c. Forms the basis of our understanding of the person and work of Christ - book of Hebrews

II. Biblical and historic context of Leviticus

A. Biblical context of Leviticus

1. Exodus:
 - a. Israelites brought out of captivity in Egypt
 - b. People dwelling at Mt Sinai where they were progressively being prepared and organized into being the nation of Israel
2. Numbers:
 - a. Preparations being made to move into the Promised Land
 - b. They were a large number of people
 - c. Wilderness wanderings due to rebellion and ungodliness

B. Historical context of Leviticus

1. Summary/overview - refer to the attached chronology
2. What is happening here?
 - a. Transition from a family, group of tribes, into a nation
 - b. Fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham

III. Theme: A holy people living in the presence of a holy God

A. General Principle 1 - The Lord being present with his people

1. The Lord is a holy God who desires to dwell with his people
2. Who the People are and the basis of their relationship with God

B. General Principle 2 - The Lord speaks

1. Lev 1:1 - The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting
2. It is the Lord who spoke
3. That the Lord "spoke"
 - a. That the Lord speaks at all is a grace
 - b. The Lord speaks authoritatively - "the Lord called"
 - c. Where the Lord spoke from - "from the tent of meeting" (the most holy place)
 - d. The Lord speaks in the context of his law and his covenant
 - e. How the Lord speaks to his people - through a mediator

C. General Principle 3 - Holiness

1. Holiness the dominant concept in Leviticus
 - a. God is holy
 - b. God requires his people to be holy - and holiness is a condition to being able to be and remain in the presence of God.
2. Meaning of "holiness"

IV. Four key/fundamental principles in Leviticus *[To be developed in Session 2]*

1. Holiness and the necessity of Appropriate Sacrifice - The basis on which we come into the presence of God
2. Holiness and the necessity of a Priestly Mediator - The means by which we come into the presence of God
3. Holiness and the necessity of Purity - The basis on which we remain in the presence of God
4. Holiness and the necessity of Godly living - The manner in which we must live in the presence of God

Exodus - Chronological summary/overview

- a. Ex 1:8-22 - Israelites were in captivity in Egypt and were being oppressed by a new king/pharaoh.
- b. Ex 3:14 - God presented himself to Moses - "I am".
- c. God appoints Moses to take the Israelites out from Egypt and promises deliverance for the people of Israel.
- d. Ex 7-14 - God delivered his people (the people of Israel) out of slavery in Egypt (after 400 years). In so doing, God gives a further demonstration of who he is, and also as to who God's people are, and that God does deliver his people. God's redemption of his people is referred to frequently as a reminder to the people of this.
- e. Ex 15:22 - 17:7 - God provides the practical necessities of life - water and food - for the people day by day and protected them from attack by the enemies. This becomes a perpetual reminder that God provides for and protects his people.
- f. Ex 18 - The people of Israel start to be progressively more organised into a civic community - here, in the administration of civic justice.
- g. Ex 19 - Arrive at Mt Sinai - where God directly engages with them (through Moses).
- h. Ex 19-40 - At Mt Sinai
 - God's covenant with the people is confirmed - Ex 20 - 24
 - Ex 20 - 23:19 - God delivers his law. It is important to note that the law is given after God redeems his people. God's law is not the basis of their redemption, but rather it is God's grace that is. The law is given to a redeemed people; that is, to govern how they are to live as God's people.
 - Ex 23:20-33 - God states his promise regarding the conquest of Canaan (the Promised Land).
 - Ex 24:7-8 - The confirmation of the covenant with the reading of the Book of the Covenant and the affirmation of it by the people.
 - Requirements of the Tabernacle and the priests established - Ex 25 - 30
 - Golden Calf incident - Ex 32-34
 - Ex 33 - Intercession by Moses and God relents
 - Ex 34:1-9 - Re-issuing of the law - but note in particular v.9, "*And [Moses] said, 'If now I have found favour in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.'*"
 - Ex 34:10-12 - The renewal of the covenant
 - Construction of the Tabernacle (in accordance with the requirements set out in Ex 25 - 30) - Ex 35 - 40. Refer to the floor plan diagram, below.
 - God establishes his presence with his people - in the Tabernacle - Ex 40:34-38.

The Tabernacle - Floor Plan

