

Sermon Outline

“Leviticus and the Christian Life”

Leviticus 1 – Kevin DeYoung – October 3, 2010

Introduction

1. There are five types of sacrifices mentioned in Leviticus: burnt offerings (1:1-17), grain offerings (2:1-16), peace offerings (3:1-17), sin offerings (4:1-5:13), and guilt offerings (5:14-6:7). The most common sacrifice, the one that was most foundational to the whole system and the one mentioned in Leviticus 1, is the burnt offering.
2. Depending on his financial means, the worshiper would bring an unblemished bull (the rich), sheep or bird (the poor) to the tabernacle to be sacrificed. The worshiper would lay his hands on the animal’s head and transfer his sins to it as a substitute. The animal would be killed, and the blood would be sprinkled on the side of the altar as a way of symbolizing that the life of the animal was being offered to God.
3. When did these sacrifices occur? There were burnt offerings going all the time: every morning and every evening, extra on Saturday, extra at the beginning of a month, extra during the feasts, plus every time a child was born, or a man or woman had a discharge or a disease cleared up. And if there was ever a break, like at night, the priest was supposed to keep the fire going. So, the altar was a busy place. And the burnt offering is only one of five offerings.

How do these sacrifices apply to the Christian?

A. True worship is costly.

1. The whole sacrificial system reminded the people: give God what is first and what is best. Do you only give God whatever time is left over? Whatever energy is left over? Whatever money is left over? Don’t think, “How can I live a life of minimal obedience?” Think, “How can I love God more, know his glory more, serve him more?”
2. True worship is not measured by what you give, but by what you hold back. Are you giving to God what is first and what is best? Does it cost you anything to be a Christian? Roman 12:1-2 calls us to climb up on the altar. The best and most valuable thing you have to offer is yourself.

B. God is holy and without his Provision, we are not.

1. Holiness is the overarching theme of the book of Leviticus. In fact, the whole system of Israel’s worship assumed the holiness of God as its starting place. That is why there are holy people (the priests), with holy clothes, in a holy land (Canaan), at a holy place (tabernacle/temple), using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days and living by a holy law—that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

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2. In view of this divine holiness, how do we live in the presence of such a holy God? Only by reconciliation.
 - a. The fire on the bronze altar was supposed to burn without ceasing! For us, there will never be a day when we don't need a substitute.
 - b. Morning and evening, day after day, bull after bull, sheep after sheep, little bird after little bird, killed, gutted, flayed, and roasted on the altar of God's presence. Why? Because every day in God's presence, surrounded by his holiness, is a day we deserve to die ... unless there is a mediator to lay a hand on us both.

C. God provides a Substitute.

1. The burnt offering was a vicarious offering (the animal takes our place). Verse 4 states that the worshiper shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. There was:
 - a. Transfer: "My guilt be upon your head..."
 - b. Identification: "You will be my substitute..."
2. In all of these sacrifices, morning, noon and night, the worshiper is led to think, over and over again: There is my substitute. I am not worthy to live in God's presence. I must have an offering in my place.
3. But all these food sacrifices rise to be a *"pleasing aroma to the LORD"* (verses 9, 13, 17). God takes a deep breath and smiles, "I am satisfied. Your ransom has been purchased."
4. Imagine the smell of the blood, the cry of the bleating sacrifice, the sight of mangled flesh and smoke day after day, year after year, burnt offering after burnt offering for centuries. And then the wild-eyed, bug-eating prophet (John the Baptist) comes along and points to this man named Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Had anyone ever uttered better words than that?

Jesus is our Mediator, our Reconciliation and our Atoning Sacrifice.

1. Jesus is our burnt offering offered up once for all and that we might live unto God and with God. He was the best and costliest sacrifice. He was the perfect offering, valuable beyond measure and without defect.
 - a. 1 Peter 1:18-19 – *"You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."*

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2. Christ was a pleasing aroma in the nostrils of his heavenly Father.
 - a. Ephesians 5:1-2 *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*
 - b. Imagine: Laying your hands on Jesus' head ... You kill him ... But as he commits his spirit into his Father's hands, the Father breathes in deep, satisfied that Jesus sacrifice was acceptable and that all our sins have all been atoned for.

Fellowship Starters

1. Kevin shared that the whole sacrificial system reminded the people: give God what is first and what is best. Do you only give God whatever time, energy or money is left over? How can you love, know and serve God with all your heart?
2. Kevin shared that true worship is not measured by what we give, but by what we hold back. He quoted Romans 12: 1-2 which tells us that the best and most valuable thing we have to offer is ourselves. What does it cost you to be a Christian? Are there areas of your life you have not surrendered?
3. One of Kevin's points was that God is holy, and without his provision, we are not. How has Christ's life, death and resurrection made the necessary provision for us to live in the presence of a holy God?
4. Like the animal sacrifices, our sin was transferred to Jesus, and he identified with us as our substitute. Do you live continually aware that Jesus is your substitute for all your sins, or is life more like a performance treadmill? How can embracing and applying this truth free you from the condemnation and guilt of self-atonement?
5. How does Leviticus 1 foreshadow the ultimate burnt offering sacrifice in Jesus' death on the cross?