

Leviticus

Principles and laws are guiding and deterring forces in the lives of people. Leviticus was such a force in the lives of the Israelites. It is a book of God's ordinances on how his people should live and relate to him. It is a book of God sanctifying his beloved. Within its wisdom are contained instructions concerning offerings, priestly duties, and the Day of Atonement. It is to these three subjects that focus will be given.

Unto Moses and the people of Israel were given five main offerings. They are the burnt, meal, peace, sin, and trespass offering. Each one had special significance and purpose. The burnt, meal, and peace offering dealt mainly with consecration and thanksgiving. While the sin and trespass offering was a sacrifice for sins, thus restoring one's relations with God. These offerings also have a special correspondence to Christian truths. For example, the burnt, meal, and peace offering speaks of our devotion to the Lord, offering *ourselves* as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12). The sin and trespass offering find their glorious fulfillment in the death of Christ on the cross, who was the Lamb that "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29b). Through Christ's New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament foreshadowing, we have been restored to God!

Another foreshadowing of Christ was the office of the priest. It was the priest's duty to be a mediator between God and man. His ministry was basically twofold: tabernacle service (offerings, care of the tabernacle furnishings, etc.) and personal service (inspection of unclean persons, instruction of the law, and supporting the spiritual welfare of the people). For these special assignments, the tribe of Levi was chosen. The role of the priesthood finds its pinnacle in the person of Jesus Christ. For the Word states, "...consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Hebrews 3:1b). And again, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5: 6b). (list of priestly duties adapted from Willmington's guide to the Bible, pg. 75)

Finally to be considered is Israel's Day of Atonement. It took place on the tenth day, of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. It was to be a day of humility, fasting, and sacrifice (burnt and sin offerings). For the high priest, this was the only day he could enter the most holy place of the tabernacle. Before this could happen, however, an elaborate series of priestly sanctification and cleansing had to be performed (Leviticus 16). Once in the most holy place, the high priest would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. This was to prophesy the coming of God's mercy, through blood, in the person of Jesus Christ and his perfect sacrifice. For the Israelites, the Day of Atonement meant forgiveness for the past year's sins. For Christians, it richly forecasts the coming of Christ's vicarious death.

The entire universe is governed by laws. The same Lawgiver of those statues supplied his people with holy ordinances. These laws were for their good. They were for their earthly and spiritual advancement. Through them, they came to realize that God was infinitely holy and that they were unholy. They learned that being sinful required a penalty to be paid. That penalty was death. They learned that God would accept a substitute for that penalty: a goat, or lamb, or turtledove. In short, Leviticus is about God hinting to the children of Israel about Christ and Christlikeness.