

## Leviticus “Approaching God & Obeying God”

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While Exodus showed us how God demonstrated his power by delivering the children of Israel and inviting them into a covenant relationship, Leviticus now gives detail on how to approach and obey God.

Leviticus has a lot of material that deals with the laws of sacrifice and cleanness/uncleanness for the children of Israel. As you read Leviticus it is helpful to keep in mind that God is a holy God. Some actions are inherently sinful and they thus defile the person or nation that commit them. Some conditions/situations, though not necessarily *chosen* by the person, represent defilement, and so render that person "unclean." Consequently, he/she needs to temporarily refrain from worship actions, since God is holy.

Uncleanness is not presented as an ultimate *state* for that individual, but the temporary exclusion is to underscore the absolute holiness of God. For this reason I suggest that the first part of Leviticus (chapters 1-17) be remembered as teaching about "Approaching God: Dealing with Defilement." The second part of Leviticus (ch. 18-27) is about "Obeying God: Factors of Fellowship," that is, what must be done by the community of faith to maintain fellowship with one another and this holy God.

1. If you read through the whole book this week you will find meticulous detail on how the sacrifices were to be offered (e.g. ch. 1-7, 16, 17, 22, 23). We do not, of course, offer sacrifices today (because Christ the perfect sacrifice has been given in our behalf), however, note the multiple aspects of relationship with God that are addressed in the different types of sacrifices. Take time to thank God for what he has provided for you through Jesus Christ. If you have time, read through Hebrews 5-10 to compare and contrast the sacrifice of Christ to those of Leviticus.
2. Note the exacting detail regarding how the sacrifices were to be handled. This, too, suggests much regarding how God was to be approached. [You may want to give special consideration, in **contrast** to the instructions from God, to the offering of Nadab and Abihu in chapter 10.] Although God has not given us such detailed instructions on how to worship him in the New Testament, we ought to recognize the significance of his holy, divine standards. Consider

this as you meditate on Hebrews 10:7-25 (and following). Praise God for the privilege of access you have through Christ.

3. As you read through the book, note the recurrent themes (topics) of **holy/holiness, unclean/uncleanness, sacrifice(s), blood, and atonement**. After reading in Leviticus, try to write a single sentence to summarize the book in a single sentence (in your own words) using all of the words in the above list. You may want to begin your sentence with: "God is . . . ," or "God requires . . . ."
4. Contrast the Day of Atonement sacrifices (ch. 16) with the sacrifices of chapters 1-7. Meditate on the differences and what they suggest to you as a follower of Jesus Christ.
5. One ought to recognize the great amount of personal responsibility/accountability for one's actions that are implied by these details of the law. In contrast to the "pass-the-buck" attitude or the "it's-not-my-fault, it's \_\_\_\_\_ fault" attitudes of today (and Genesis 3!), what do the exacting standards of personal accountability in the law suggest for how one ought to approach God today? (Also consider 1Sa 15:9&15 versus 2Sa 12:13 in their contexts.)
6. Note the provisions that God included for the poor and those who fell on hard times. What does this suggest to you about the character of God?
7. As the children of Israel gathered for their various annual feasts and celebrations picture yourself (as best you can!) as part of their community meeting together for these sacrifices, feasts and times of worship. Consider what practical benefit these gatherings would give to God's people as they attended these feasts throughout the year.

We can thank God that so much of what was pictured for the Israelites in blood sacrifices was fulfilled in the substitutionary sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. HE was the perfect sacrifice that paid for the sins of all who trust in him. Animal sacrifices were no longer needed. After reading the Old Testament book of Leviticus, the New Testament book of Hebrews would be an excellent book to read to see the fulfillment through Christ.