



LEVITICUS

APRIL 2018

Read on your own or with others,
which ever you prefer.

This leaflet is just a brief overview of the 'big picture' of this book. If you have been reading the Bible for some time you will be aware there is much more to it than you'll find here.

If you are new to reading the Bible don't worry too much if there are details you do not quite get at the moment - focus on the 'big picture'.

INTRODUCTION

Is Leviticus a book for us in the 21st century? That's a question you might find yourself asking as you read it. This is a book that deals with sacrifices and rules that haven't been practiced, even by Jewish people, since the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem almost 2000 years ago.

Yet, the main theme of Leviticus is not temple sacrifices, but holiness. It's a book full of instructions to Old Testament Israel on how to live right in the sight of God. The commands here point us again and again to Jesus as the one who makes us holy in God's sight as well as impressing upon us the responsibility we have as God's people to live holy lives before him (Leviticus 11:45, 1 Peter 1:16).

OUTLINE

OFFERINGS: LEVITICUS 1-7

These chapters speak about different offerings and explain the regulations of how they were to be offered in various situations. Most of these offerings required the sacrifice of an animal. This emphasises a clear message. If I am to live something else must die for my sin (Leviticus 17:11).

As you read these accounts you may find that the details of the sacrifices seem a bit gruesome and make us cry out 'too much information'. Yet, there is an important lesson in these descriptions; they remind us of how repulsive and offensive our sin is to God.

Some of these offerings were to be burned up completely. Yet, with others part was to be kept back and eaten by the people and/or the priests. The picture here is of God sharing a meal with his people. This pictures the gift of fellowship with God that comes when our sins are dealt with.

Ultimately, it is important to remember that these offerings all point us to Jesus and the work he would do in paying for our sin on the cross so that, if we believe in him, we can know God.

PRIESTS: LEVITICUS 8-10

The priests had the role of representing the people before God. In these chapters we have a lot of details about who should be a priest, what they should wear and how they should behave. We are reminded here, in the same way as we saw with the instructions for the Tabernacle in Exodus, that it is God, not us who decides how we come to him. Chapter 10 shows us the importance of learning this lesson.

CLEAN OR UNCLEAN: LEVITICUS 11-16

While we may see hygienic common sense encouraged in some of these regulations (ie. Regulations on skin disease or mould in the home), the terms 'clean' and 'unclean' go much deeper than this. 'Clean' means acceptable to God. 'Unclean' mean unacceptable to God.

These regulations picture two truths. First, to be clean we need to be perfect and free from any taint of sin. Second, to be clean we need to keep God's commands. We know we fail on both accounts, so it is an encouragement that the passage ends with the provision of a sacrifice of atonement. This points us to the only sacrifice that can truly pay for our sins and make us right with God – the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

A HOLY LIFE: LEVITICUS 17-27

The final section of Leviticus contains rules for holy living. There is a need for care in reading and applying these instructions to our lives. Some of these rules no longer apply to us directly as they were for a time while God's people wait for Jesus to come (ie. the rules on clean and unclean animals (Mark 7:14-19)). Others, though are clear principles that apply in the Old Testament and New Testament times (eg. Leviticus 19:3,4,11).

In Chapter 26 God lays down for the nation of Israel the rewards for obedience and the punishment for disobedience. Being holy matters! Israel would fail God and, in the end, they received the punishments described here. However, chapter 26 is not the conclusion of the book. The last chapter speaks about redemption. This pictures the Lord Jesus and the salvation he would bring; a price that was paid – Jesus giving himself on the cross – and a freedom purchased for all who would believe in him.

ASKING THE QUESTIONS THE BIBLE WANTS YOU TO ASK

What does this book teach you about Jesus? (Luke 24:45-47)

What does this book teach you about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you encouraged? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you corrected? (Romans 15:4)

What difference do the truths of this book make in your life (Matthew 7:24-27)