

Lake Geneva Bible Conference

July, 2005

STUDIES IN THE CEREMONIAL LAW
LEVITICUS

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I. General Introduction:

Getting the best view of a Bible conference is not the easiest thing to do. To some it is a vacation, to some it is a time of inquiry, to others it is a time to meet old friends. Occasionally someone is at a conference who thinks it will be a time of deep theological thought. All of these ideas, and others, fill the air of a conference and it becomes obvious that the conference that is able to fulfill all of these things is a remarkable gathering indeed. In the case of this conference, these particular studies are given in the hope they will help us look more closely at some important aspects of Scripture. Some of these are better known and some are more obscure. How we will fare remains to be seen but it is our prayerful hope that the study of any aspect of Scripture will be edifying and expanding. So it is that our intended talks on this subject are not selected for novelty or confusion but for an enrichment of the understanding if the purposes and blessings of the Lord on His people.

In this "age of grace" it is possible to misunderstand the ideal of the law given by God. By "law" we mean the divinely originated declarations that were to govern the people of God in all aspects of life. Customarily we divide the law into sections identified as civil, ceremonial, and public but in the final analysis the law is "one" and is (was) mandated by the Lord, Himself. Our studies at this time, however, will be chiefly in the ceremonial law....and only in a part of it---as this is a portion of the revelation that is easily forgotten. The civil codes are those more obvious as they govern us in our relationships with others. But the ceremonial laws especially establish the relationship with God and their importance cannot be over-estimated. It is important, however, to remember that we are not "under law" but "under grace". The law allows us to see the desires of God more closely, I suppose, and thereby provides an illustrative insight into the grace of God that we would not have otherwise. When it is seen that the purpose of the ceremonial law was to bring one into a worshipful relationship with the Deity it results in an appreciation and thankfulness that we are the people of God. The fixing of these laws and their intent is clearly seen in Leviticus 19 and that is our initial study. The point of the chapter is to *live with an awareness of the Lord.*

I will sketch the content of the messages, as I envision them and cite the appropriate Scripture for your reading, study, etc.

II. Message # 1: Live with an Awareness of the Lord.....Leviticus 19

In all aspects of living those who are the people of God are guided by His revealed will. It is His presence with us that provides the backbone for our thinking. Whether we are working, playing, etc., the concepts tie in closely to Colossians 3:17...a challenge to live daily in the presence of the Lord. Our analysis in Leviticus 19 looks like this:

- A. Life Order: I am the Lord....v.3
- B. When you Worship: I am the Lord...v 4-8
- C. When you are Blessed: I am the Lord....v 9-10
- D. When you deal with Others: I am the Lord....v 11-18
- E. In governance of Life: I am the Lord....v19-25
- F. In public witness: I am the Lord....v 26-37

In short, there is no part of life in which the Lord is not involved and it is our happy privilege to acknowledge Him as the "Lord" in every activity. Should there be an activity in which we cannot acknowledge Himit is probably doubtful and should be given up. As Proverbs puts it: "Acknowledge Him and He will direct your path." (3:6)

III. Message # 3: When you worship: bring the sacrifices of the Law.....

Now it is necessary to put this in the proper perspective before someone decides to kill a lamb.....the sacrifices of the law are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, He is our peace and all that is needed to satisfy God is the Lord Jesus. But a study of the Levitical sacrifices helps us to understand what God wants in worship....and it is somewhat different than three choruses played on a harmonica and sung slightly off key....but forgive this digression. It is also necessary to note that in the law the physical offering of sacrifice meant nothing if the heart was not in it. (1 Samuel 15:22, Psalm 51:17, etc) And to keep our vocabulary steady, the offering was the mode, the material offered was the sacrifice. Probably more will be said about this...by someone! I will try to explain the symbolism in each of the sacrificial offerings. The total picture is pretty complicated while the basic ideas are apparent and simple.

- A. Bring an Offering of Love..... Leviticus 1; 6:8-13

The whole burnt offering is an offering of love...it is done simply to honor God.

B. Bring a Meal Offering...Leviticus 2; 6:14-23

This is a consecration offering

C. Bring a Peace Offering....Leviticus 3; 7:11

This is a fellowship offering

D. Bring a Sin Offering...Leviticus 4; 6:24-30

This is a cleansing offering

E. Bring a Trespass Offering....Leviticus 5; 7:1-10

This is a confessional offering.

The Lord Jesus fulfills all of these things so when we worship we come in His Name and we are accepted as those who have met all the requirements of the law since we have been declared justified in Him. But in the practical areas of our hearts we need to think of the aspects of these things. Do we love God and how do we show it? Worship is the heart's adoration of God and that enactment is accompanied by other areas of life that honor Him. When I worship (remembering John 4) I should be thinking of Him.

IV. Message # 3: When You are Having a Special Day...Leviticus 23

Of course, it might be a family celebration, a birthday or anything in that character. It could be promotion at work or a recognition of something meaningful. The nature of the occasion is not so important as is the fact that you remember the Lord in it. The concept is that we order our lives in accord with the appointments of God and make every occasion "special" in the knowledge of His will.

A. Honor the rest God has provided23:1-3

The Sabbath is made for man....not vice versa.

B. Remember the great deliverance: 23:4-14

The Passover noted Israel's deliverance but does it not suggest something of our own? We are told that "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us". Dare we forget the implications of His death and our resultant life?

C. Remember the provision of God 23:15-22

The abundance of blessing dominates

D. Remember how time is apportioned: 23:23-25

The thought ties in nicely with Psalm 90 and Ecclesiastes 12:1

E. Remember the joy of atonement: 23:26-32

Many of these subjects tie together and there is some repetition of ideal....that is not bad because we forget too easily and anything that keeps basic truth in view is important to us.

F. Remember how God cared and provided for all under the most difficult circumstances. 23:34

It is so easy to become thankless..but on any special day one should be given to thanksgiving and rejoicing.

The foregoing are the "feasts of the Lord" although I have not used all the technical names. They move through the year and helped the people to keep a calendar of thankfulness. A good idea for us...and when you have a special day---remember the Lord.

V. Message # 4.....The Levitical Priesthood...Leviticus 8-10, etc.

In the Old Testament the priesthood was given to the family of Levi. Every member of the family was a "levite" but not all were priests. However anyone who was a legitimate priest belonged to that family. Reading about it may not seem exciting but it will give us some idea of what God expects in those who serve Him. The following material is in broad form but the hope is that you can follow on my narrow discussions,.

A. The selection and the institution: 8-10

1. The preparation for service.
2. The serious nature of the service.
3. The ongoing order.

B. Some details for the priesthood

1. The dietary code...Leviticus 11...not only a priestly note!

- 2. Qualifications: 21
- 3. Duties...24
- 4. Approaching God...16
- 5. Moral purity: 18, 20

We are not under the technical order....we are not Levites, but all believers are "priests" and the character of service God required certainly indicates the nature of life He desires. The institutions are behind us and locked in a different dispensation and culture....but the moral character of the Lord has not changed a bit! He is the same...yesterday, today, and forever. We who serve should be held in humility and faithfulness.

VI. Message # 5. In your societal participation, honor the Lord Selected chapters

A.. The Dietary Code: Leviticus 11

We are not going back to the technicalities of it but what does it tell us that will harmonize with the concept of eating and drinking in the New Testament?

B.. The centrality of worship

C.. The respect of life: Leviticus 12

D. The protection of the community. 13, 14, 15

The study of leprosy etc., is interesting and it shows us the desire for consideration of all the people You will find it interesting to see how the Lord Jesus heals lepers in the Gospels and what He tells them to do.

E. Life in Canaan

We are a vital part of society....in the New Testament seen in many places of which 1 Peter 2 is part of my favorite reading. We are citizens of heaven, too, but we are living here and should be living out a testimony for the glory of God. The ceremonial law stressed that in terms that are sometimes so expressive we are shocked by them but we would be better prepared in our worship and witness if we took concretely the ideals of God.

VII. Message # 6: Living in the Land and being obedient to our Lord.

Obedience is the key word in most of these studies. It combines nicely with love and faithfulness. When I read the ceremonial laws and the actions taken in those days, I am filled with appreciation for the grace of God to them and to us. With that I am deeply appreciative of the instructions God has given us that would make our paths more plain and more complete if we would be give ourselves to them. Try 1 Timothy 4 and the Pauline advice at the end of the chapter that gears itself to such a need. But keep in mind that we are not going back to legalism but we are, hopefully, going to walk on with God as long as He gives us the opportunity and direction.

Thanks for joining us for these studies at Geneva. There are many points not discussed...I am willing to talk about them (if I have any knowledge at the question point) at any time while at this conference.