JESUS EVERYWHERE

Jesus is the first, last, and best thing about the Bible. Ellen White puts it like this: “In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift” (Steps to Christ [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956], p. 21). From Genesis to Revelation, Jesus is revealed through people, stories, symbols, and sacrifices. When Jesus was giving a Bible study as He walked with two followers toward the town of Emmaus, the Bible says, “He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). The apostle Paul understood this as well, showing “from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28).

Why is Jesus everywhere in Scripture? When the devil deceived humanity in the Garden of Eden, Jesus immediately took charge of our fate. It was Jesus who gave the first promise of redemption, took the first life of the sacrificial lamb, gave Noah the blueprints for the ark, walked and talked with the patriarchs, led Israel in a pillar of fire, gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, gave Moses the architectural drawings for the tabernacle, filled the tabernacle with His glory in Exodus and Leviticus, and was represented by the sacrificial offerings (1 Cor. 5:7), the holy priests (Heb. 4:14), the table of showbread (John 6:35), the candlesticks (John 8:12), the door (John 10:9), and the curtain (Heb. 10:20). In fact, the more you pay attention to the details pointing to Jesus in Leviticus, the deeper your understanding of what Jesus was saying and doing in the Gospels will be.
Outline Leviticus 1–7 from the translation of your choice. You may also paraphrase the chapters in your own words, or mind-map each of the five ritual sacrifices (burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering).
The book of Leviticus is one of the most neglected books in all Scripture, but it is also one of the most Christ-centered books you will ever read. It was written by Moses and is part of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

In the book of Exodus, God gave Moses the architectural drawings for the sanctuary, but in Leviticus, He gave Moses the guidelines for worshipping in the sanctuary. Sanctuary worship reveals the way to God. Psalm 77 says, “Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary” (v. 13). Sanctuary worship reveals Jesus who is “the way” (John 14:6) You are being invited in the book of Leviticus to know Jesus better!

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UNLEARNING DEMONOLOGY

Because Satan lives and breathes to slander the name and character of God, he taught the pagan nations that God was easily angered and that He was pleased by pain and blood. Millions thought they were learning theology when in fact they were learning demonology from their false prophets and teachers. The truth is that God was never pleased with the blood of animals (Isa. 1:11), and He abhors human sacrifice (Lev. 18:21) and the consuming of blood, which was common among the pagan religions of the time (Lev. 19:26). The God of heaven brings life and joy (John 10:10). Death and sorrow come from sin and Satan (John 8:44).

That still leaves the question of why the sacrificial system was necessary. Here are three reasons: First, to teach humanity the real and horrible consequences of sin, which hurts not only the one participating but also many others. It is like a grenade; it hurts everyone around it. The truth is that all of us have been victims and victimizers of sins. Our sins hurt God, our fellow human beings, and even the nature around us (Rom. 8:19–23). When sinners appeared at the temple with their sacrifices, the priest would hand them the knife, and they themselves were required to quickly take the life of the animal by cutting its throat. This must have been extremely difficult, since these animals were often part of the offeror’s own livestock and were probably loved (Lev. 1:2).

Second, the sacrificial system was necessary to stir the heart toward repentance, which simply means “a changed mind.” In other words, as the sinner better understood the horrible results of their sin, they would begin to change their mind about it. They saw it for what it is: a real predator of innocence, purity, peace, love, joy, unity, and life. For this reason, when we teach the cross of Christ, people are moved to “change their mind” about sin. They are moved by the Holy Spirit! In fact, repentance is a gift from Jesus to those who behold the cross (Acts 5:31).

Third, God had made a promise to the human family that He would send His Son to die in their place (Gen. 3:15). Every sacrifice pointed to this great event; they were a daily reminder that Jesus would come to die and that their sins would be forgiven through His blood. Therefore, when Jesus died on Calvary, the sacrificial system no longer had any meaning and was abandoned forever. In other words, it was allowed to continue only until the Messiah had completely fulfilled the purpose of it (1 John 2:1–3).

Unlike the pagan religions, the Israelite sacrifices were not to appease a bloodthirsty and angry god; they instead pointed forward to a God who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Paganism teaches that a sacrifice had to be made for God to love us. Christianity teaches that God Himself became the sacrifice because He loves you! Unlike the pagan religions, the Israelites were taught to identify God’s love in the sacrificial services and, as a result, to live in a way that honored the One who died for them. In other words, the sacrificial system moved them to repentance, not sinful revelry.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

John 5:39, 40
Luke 24:27
Isaiah 1:11
Hebrews 10:5–10
Matthew 27:51
1 John 2:1–3

What other verses come to mind in connection with Leviticus 1–7?

Review your memorized verse from Leviticus 1–7.
THE OFFERINGS

Each kind of sacrifice points to the eternal love offered to the world on Calvary. Like the four Gospels in the New Testament, each sacrifice in Leviticus reveals another aspect or allows an in-depth look at our Savior, His mercy, and His justice, all revealed on the cross. Each type of sacrifice points to the Messiah.

1. He would be sinless. In the first seven chapters of Leviticus, we learn that the Messiah would be blameless, perfect, spotless, and sinless. We know this because the animals designated by God for sacrifices (e.g., ox, goat, ram, lamb, dove, pigeon) had to be without any “blemish” (Lev. 1:3). This is no doubt why Jesus claimed that He was without sin (John 8:46) and that He always did what pleased His Father (John 8:29).

2. He would be a sacrifice. We also discover that the coming Messiah would lay down His life, as the sacrificial animals did (Lev. 4:27–29). Imagine how it could have gone had the people and His own disciples understood this identifier. Instead, they wrongly believed that the Messiah would be a conquering king instead of the suffering servant foretold by Isaiah (chap. 53). They were looking for a temporal hero, not a spiritual one. But hundreds of years before, Leviticus predicted that the Messiah would lay down His life to save the world!

3. He would be a sin bearer. Interestingly, when the animal was slain by the sinner at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. 1:4, 5), the blood was caught in a bowl by the officiating priest and either sprinkled on the altar of burnt offering or taken inside the tabernacle and sprinkled before the curtain dividing the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Either way, the blood of the animal carried away the sins of the sinner. No wonder John the Baptist shouted, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” when he saw Jesus (John 1:29).

It’s also interesting to note that the sinner would lay one hand on the head of the sacrifice and confess his sins upon it before taking the animal’s life (Lev. 1:4, 5; 5:5, 6). This is essentially what we do when we confess our sins to God. We are placing them upon the head of Jesus, who died for us 2,000 years ago, and accepting our responsibility for His death. In other words, Jesus becomes our substitute and takes our sins upon Himself (Lev. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:24).

4. He would be a “sweet aroma.” The smoke coming from the burnt sacrifices were considered a “sweet aroma to the Lord” (Lev. 1:9). Everywhere Jesus went, the atmosphere came alive with His presence. In both Ephesians 5:2 and Philippians 4:18 our Savior is described as a “sweet-smelling aroma.”

If the Jews had not lost Jesus in their understanding of the temple services, they would have been much quicker to identify Him. This applies to us as well—the more we see Jesus in Leviticus, the more we are assured that the Jesus in the New Testament matches up perfectly with the criteria of our promised Savior and Messiah.
THE ONE

“But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father’s heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ John 3:16, KJV. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us” (Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 13).

“When Adam and his sons began to offer the ceremonial sacrifices ordained by God as a type of the coming Redeemer, Satan discerned in these a symbol of communion between earth and heaven. During the long centuries that have followed, it has been his constant effort to intercept this communion. Untiringly has he sought to misrepresent God and to misinterpret the rites pointing to the Saviour, and with a great majority of the members of the human family he has been successful.

“While God has desired to teach men that from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction. Thus the sacrifices and the ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God” (Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917], pp. 685, 686).

“Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts. When man fell by transgression the law was not changed, but a remedial system was established to bring him back to obedience. The promise of a Saviour was given, and sacrificial offerings pointing forward to the death of Christ as the great sin offering were established. But had the law of God never been transgressed, there would have been no death, and no need of a Saviour; consequently, there would have been no need of sacrifices” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 363).

“There are many who try to blend these two systems, using the texts that speak of the ceremonial law to prove that the moral law has been abolished; but this is a perversion of the Scriptures. The distinction between the two systems is broad and clear. The ceremonial system was made up of symbols pointing to Christ, to His sacrifice and His priesthood. This ritual law, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be performed by the Hebrews until type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings were to cease. It is this law that Christ ‘took . . . out of the way, nailing it to His cross.’ Colossians 2:14, KJV” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 365).
inQuire

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Why do you think it’s difficult for many to read through the book of Leviticus? What can be done to change that?

How and where is Jesus revealed in the sacrificial services?

If you were asked to share the gospel according to Leviticus, what would you say?

How were Israel’s sacrificial services different from the pagan ones?

What would you say to help someone who was struggling with why God would create such a system of sacrifices?

What step do you need to take today in your relationship with God?

If you were an Israelite living in the days of Leviticus, what would be the hardest part about approaching God with your sins? What would you say is the hardest part of approaching God today?

What do the sacrificial services teach us about sin? What aspect of God’s character do they reveal?