

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
December 16, 2015

Lesson Text: Leviticus 22:17-25, 31-33
Lesson Title: Acceptable Offerings

Introduction

The Book of Leviticus is not a book of bedtime stories. In fact, most who read this book would describe it as hard to understand and boring. It reads like a book of odd rules that mean little or nothing to New Testament believers. But in reality, Leviticus illustrates the significance of an acceptable life before the Lord.

Leviticus opens and closes at Mount Sinai, where God gave Moses the Law. The instructions given and the offerings required may sound strange to us today, but they demonstrate the distinctness of Holy God from sinful man. The first three words of Leviticus are “*the LORD called*” (Leviticus 1:1). God is speaking clearly to the nation about what is acceptable to Him. Every generation would be wise to hear and heed His words.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) was formed in 1901 for the purpose of overseeing uniformity and consistency in weights and measurements in the United States of America. From 1830 until 1901, the role of overseeing weights and measures was carried out by the Office of Standard Weights and Measures, which was part of the U.S. Treasury Department. While the average person gives little or no thought to everyday products and services and how standards and measurements work, a fixed standard is vital to life. Imagine our frustration if lightbulbs did not fit into lamps, or if there were no common sizes for clothing, or standard-sized tires for automobiles. What if trains could not move from one state to another because the tracks were a different gauge? How confusing would it be if twelve inches were a foot in North Carolina but it took fourteen inches to make a foot in Texas? That would be unacceptable and make life very difficult.

While our culture has become obsessed with political correctness and environmental issues, standards have been thrown to the wind. It seems the rule of the day is similar to that of the days of the Judges, “...*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6). God wanted His people to live by standards and part of living in that manner involved presenting acceptable offerings to the Lord. The Israelites were commanded to bring certain offerings to the Lord on certain days throughout the year. The types of offering and amounts were clearly established in the word of God. God’s requirements were not subject to public opinion or free to be adjusted based on the discretion of the giver.

The Regulation of the Acceptable Offerings (Leviticus 22:17-25)

The first section of Leviticus 22 pertains to specific instructions for the priestly order as they approach God in worship (Leviticus 22:1-9). God requires all priests who minister before Him to be ceremonially clean. The second section pertains to the food which is devoted to the priesthood and who can eat it (Leviticus 22:10-16). In this section we find a prohibition against anyone but the priests and their families partaking of food presented at the tabernacle as holy gifts. The third section of Leviticus 22 which is the focus of our lesson study pertains to God's demand for perfect animal sacrifice (Leviticus 22:17-33). Over and over in this section it is repeated this requirement that only perfect animals can be brought as sacrifices. God requires acceptable offerings.

Verse 17-19

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering; Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats.”

Anyone in the family of Israel, including the priests, “Aaron, and his sons,” or “strangers in Israel” could bring the Lord an animal sacrifice. This “oblation” or offering, may be brought “for all his vows” meaning because of a promise that person has made to the Lord, or “for all his freewill offerings,” which might be a special offering the person wants to give to the Lord out of a heart of love and gratitude.

These sacrifices and offerings are to be “offered unto the LORD for a burnt offering.” The “burnt offerings” is the first offering mentioned in Leviticus 1:1-17 and seem to be the most common type of sacrifice. They were presented voluntarily which means they were not something required of the offeror to do at the same time with the rest of Israel. He offered it when he felt the need to do so. Perhaps he felt the need for forgiveness of some sin; or, a desire to thank God for his blessings. There were many reason these sacrifices were brought, but they were for personal reasons.

The “burnt offerings” purified a worshipper from sin and prepared him to draw near to God. The offering was completely burned up to show it was totally dedicated to God. In fact, the root meaning of the word “oblation,” or “offering” means “to draw near” to God (Psalm 141:2).

The offering brought to the Lord must be “a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats.” “Beeves” is a reference to cattle, a bull or

an ox. Whether the offering was from the cattle family, sheep or goats, it had to be “without blemish.” The word “unblemished” means the animals were whole and sound, not bearing any physical defect. Just as the priests were required to be free from physical defects, so the sacrifices they offered had to be perfect or the Lord would not accept them.

Note: It would make a difference today if God’s preachers took seriously His requirements for acceptable service (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The priest in the Old Testament had respect for the ministry and high regard for the sacrifices offered to the Lord. God’s people must hold a high regard for their service and ministry. As Hosea said, “And there shall be, like people, like priest” (Hosea 4:9).

Verse 20

“But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you.”

A blemished offering was not “acceptable.” The word “acceptable” means “pleasing or delight.” The Israelite was not to bring any blemished offering to the Lord, for it was not a pleasing or delightful thing for them to do.

Why, in the ceremonial law, were perfect animals required? First, the animals were to represent to the people who were offering them the quality of perfection in God. Since God is perfect, what is offered to Him should be as near perfect as possible. Second, the offerings represented the people’s estimation of God Himself. What you offered said something about your esteem of God. Third, a blemished offering was not permitted because the offerings pointed to Christ (Hebrews 10:10). Any departure from this was to lower the concept of the person of Christ and the holiness of God (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19).

Verse 21-22

“And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD.”

In the same manner as the burnt offerings, a “peace offering” offered “unto the LORD” from the “cattle” or “sheep” must “be perfect to be accepted.” The “peace offering” was a voluntary offering to bring about peace, or fellowship with God. It could be a bull, cow, lamb, or goat. The uniqueness of the “peace offering” was it ended with a joyous feast of the priests and people in the tabernacle. They feasted together in fellowship of what had been given to them by God.

Today believer's feast together by what has been given us in Christ through His cross. Together we celebrate in our worship services what the Israelites celebrated in the tabernacle. This is one reason we are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25).

An animal sacrifice could not be presented if it was "blind, broken, maimed, had a wen, scurvy or scabbed." All of these defects made the animal visually unappealing and totally unacceptable. God wanted a sacrifice without the visible signs of the effects of sickness and living in a fallen world. A "wen" was a running sore, possibly from a skin tumor. A weak, sick, or maimed animal was not sufficient to be presented to the Lord. One only wonders how often the priests rejected worshippers and their sacrifices because the owner was trying to give the Lord an inferior animal.

In the day of Malachi, God's people attempted to bring the poor and diseased animals and offer them to the Lord. God said, "...ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD" (Malachi 1:13b). God has no obligation to accept our leftovers and offerings that cost us nothing (2 Samuel 24:24).

Verse 23

"Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted."

The one exception that allowed an animal with defects such as a limb too short or long was in the case of "a freewill offering." A blemished animal could not be offered in conjunction with the burnt offering or peace offering. However, it could be offered as a "freewill offering." The only explanation for this exception would be God's love for the poor (Leviticus 5:7-11). It is possible someone who is poor would have nothing to bring except a "bullock or a lamb" that was somehow inferior. In that case, God would accept it. However, if the blemished "bullock or lamb" was being offered "for a vow," it would not be "accepted."

Verse 24-25

"Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land. Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you."

The Israelite was prohibited from bringing any animal to the Lord which was "bruised, crushed, broken or cut." "Bruised or crushed" refers to the testicles of the male animal being unproductive or castrated. "Broken or cut" refers to any

injuries in the animal resulting from abuse or harm by nature or mankind. This type of animal was not to be “offered in the land.” Furthermore, a “stranger” who might want to pay respect to Jehovah God was forbidden from offering an animal “bruised, crushed, broken or cut.” These defects render them unacceptable as sacrifices and offerings.

The Motivation for the Acceptable Offerings (Leviticus 22:31-33)

Verse 31

“Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the LORD.”

As the requirements for the offerings come to a close, the duties of the Israelites are reinforced. First, the Israelites were motivated by God’s demand for obedience. They are to obey what the Lord has said, “keep His commandments,” and “do them.” Obedience was necessary for the preserving of the honor of the sacrificial system, and of the God they worshipped. They must obey because God is “the LORD.” He is worthy of their obedience.

Verse 32-33

“Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you, That brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD.”

Second, the Israelites were motivated by God’s name. If the people disobeyed the Lord in bringing unacceptable offerings, they would “profane” His “holy name.” To “profane” something means “to treat as common.” It also means “to corrupt or make impure.” Unacceptable offerings sacrificed in the name of the Lord meant the Israelite treated God and His requirements as common. God required He be “hallowed” or treated with reverence among the people of Israel.

Third, the Israelites were motivated by God’s redemption. God wanted Israel to know His requirements for acceptable offerings was not just based on His commands. They were also based on His redemption. It was God who “hollowed” or made Israel a special people. He “brought” them “out of the land of Egypt” to be their God. What greater motivation did they need?

Conclusion

Christians today are not required to bring animal sacrifices to God. The sacrificial system ended at the cross when Jesus Christ our perfect sacrifice gave Himself for our sins. Although the sacrificial system is no longer in force, Christians should think seriously about our motives for serving and worshipping the Lord. Do we give the Lord the leftovers or do we give Him the

best? Is our attitude acceptable? If the world could see our hearts and why we do what we do would they conclude we really love the Lord?

Christians are commanded to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord (Romans 12:1-2). Our praise (Hebrews 13:15) and our good works (Hebrews 13:16) should also be offered to the Lord. As we serve the Lord we should remember no matter what we offer to our Lord, nothing is perfect. Therefore, we must offer our sacrifices through Jesus Christ so they will be acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:5).

Note: A good prayer to pray today in connection with this lesson is Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

Amen.