

A PERPETUAL FIRE

INTRODUCTION

I have been reading through the book of Leviticus. What I have found is a book that is rich with symbolism and direction from God to His chosen people. The key message in the book is "Be holy, for I am holy".

What has that got to do with this time of year? "What has it got to do with celebrating Christ's birth?" you may ask... It has everything to do with the reason Christ came, and today I want to share some of God's guidance from this amazing book of Leviticus. This morning we will learn about:

- How we can identify Jesus in the book of Leviticus.
- A perpetual fire.
- A strange fire.

MESSAGE

JESUS IN LEVITICUS

Genesis shows us how sinful man is. It showed that God is just and that He requires judgement of sin for example:

- The Garden of Eden
- The flood of Noah's time
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Exodus we see the redemption and salvation that was offered to all who would hear. In Moses we saw type of the Redeemer that would lead us from the captivity of the world.

Leviticus follows with God's estimation of sin. It also contrasts man's sin with the holiness of God. As a person truly draws near to God, two things stand out, the utter sinfulness of man, and the absolute holiness of God.

- In Leviticus, we see how serious God is about sin when we see all the sacrifice that was required.
- The sacrifices point to Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice on the Cross.

Hebrews 9:22(NLT) In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

We cannot get a true sense of the horror that sin really is because we are sinners. Christ alone being sinless, understood it, and the horror of the cross was his evaluation of it.

The Offerings:

There are five types of offerings outlined in Leviticus. In each type there are three things in common:

- the offering – Christ is the Offering (Hebrews 10:10),
- the priest – Christ is the High Priest (Hebrews 4:14),
- the offerer – Christ is the offerer (Titus 2:14).

There are **two main types of offerings**:

Sweet smelling offerings of which the Burnt Offering was chief.

- It was burned completely as a sweet smelling savor on the Brazen Altar.
- It was a *whole* burnt offering, which means **that nothing was kept back**.
- In it, we see Christ's total submission to His Father. His whole heart, mind and will were given without reservation. He gave everything.

Ephesians 5:2 (NLT) Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. **He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.**

Jesus, in man's place was a sweet savor, **fulfilling our duty to God.**

The meat offering, flour and oil were added.

- The flour was the result of bruising or grinding of the wheat kernel. Jesus life was ground and bruised on our behalf.
- The oil represents the Holy Spirit.

The Sin Offering was solely for the atonement of sin. The fat was burned on the altar and the meat burned outside the camp to show that we must put sin away from us. **Jesus was the final and perfect sin offering.**

The High Priest:

Aaron was a type of the Great High Priest to come, Christ Jesus. He was the man of God's choosing. His tribe, the Levites, were also priests to

minister to the Lord. We are the reality of that shadow as priests unto God, the brothers of the High Priest, Christ Jesus.

The Blood:

Leviticus 17:11(NLT) for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the Lord. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible.

Leviticus places great emphasis on blood sacrifice and the importance of blood. Let us take a look at the meaning of the blood of Christ to us:

- Redemption through the blood – 1Peter 1:18,19
- Forgiveness through the blood – Ephesians 1:7
- Justification through the blood – Romans 5:9
- Peace through the blood – Colossians 1:20
- Cleansing through the blood – 1 John 1:7
- Loosing from sin through the blood - Revelation 1:5
- Enter the Holy Place by the blood - Hebrews 10:19
- Victory through the blood - Revelation 12:11
- Glory everlasting through the blood – Revelation 7:14,15

Does the precious blood of Christ mean all this to you? Pouring out His blood was pouring out His life so that all these things could be in you. That was the joy set before Him. Are we in turn pouring out our lives for Jesus?

PERPETUAL FIRE

Leviticus 6:12-13 (NLT) Meanwhile, the fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must never go out. Each morning the priest will add fresh wood to the fire and arrange the burnt offering on it. He will then burn the fat of the peace offerings on it. ¹³ Remember, the fire must be kept burning on the altar at all times. It must never go out.

According to the Bible, the fire on the altar was lit directly by the hand of God and was not permitted to go out.

- If all of the lamps of the menorah went out, they would have to be rekindled from the fire on the Altar of Burnt Offering.
- Incense was burned daily on the altar of incense at the time of the morning and the evening sacrifices. The coals used on this altar had to be taken from the Altar of Burnt Offerings.

- The Rabbi's taught this was the part of the temple service that was most beloved by God.
- The burning of the incense was symbolic of the prayer of the people rising up to God. The offering of incense had to take place after the sacrifice, because only after the atonement could communion with God take place.

When we are born-again, cleansed the blood of Jesus Christ, we immediately receive the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us. Like the fire on the altar, He sets a fire in our spirit and we are on fire for Jesus.

- Think about how excited we were when we were born again.
- You spoke to everyone.
- Our fire could easily have been what God used to ignite others for Jesus.
- God also placed in us a desire and ability to pray.
- On the day of Pentecost, tongues of fire appeared above the people.

Just like the fire on the altar, God wants the fire in us to be a perpetual fire! Just like that fire was used to ignite the incense, the Holy Spirit's fire in us should ignite a desire to pray to the Lord, morning and evening!

Leviticus 16:11-13 (NLT) "Aaron will present his own bull as a sin offering to purify himself and his family, making them right with the Lord. After he has slaughtered the bull as a sin offering, 12 he will fill an incense burner with burning coals from the altar that stands before the Lord. Then he will take two handfuls of fragrant powdered incense and will carry the burner and the incense behind the inner curtain. 13 There in the Lord's presence he will put the incense on the burning coals so that a cloud of incense will rise over the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—that rests on the Ark of the Covenant. If he follows these instructions, he will not die.

- Note that the smoke of the incense, burning with the sacred fire from the Lord, preserved the life of the priest while he was in the tabernacle.
- We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. As we keep the Holy Fire burning in our lives, our prayers presented before God will be a fragrant offering, acceptable to Him and bringing spiritual life to us – we won't backslide and die spiritually! The Holy Spirit preserves us!

Revelation 2:4 (NLT) "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!

Is our fire still burning for the Lord? Are we still spending special time in God's presence praying and seeking His will for our lives?

STRANGE FIRE

Leviticus 10:1-2 (NLT) Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the Lord by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded. 2 So fire blazed forth from the Lord's presence and burned them up, and they died there before the Lord.

The reason for Nadab and Abihu's transgression is then revealed:

Leviticus 10:8-10 (NLT) Then the Lord said to Aaron, 9 "You and your descendants must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink before going into the Tabernacle. If you do, you will die. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed from generation to generation. 10 You must distinguish between what is sacred and what is common, between what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean.

- Aaron's sons had probably been drinking. Because of this they could not discern the difference between the holy and unholy, and between the unclean and clean.
- Common unholy fire probably looked no different to them in their drunken stupor.
- In disobedience, they offered God what was common, instead of what was holy, as God required and it cost them their lives.

"Be holy, for I am Holy" is the core message from Leviticus. When we start messing with the things of the world, it is amazing how quickly we lose perspective on what God wants for our lives:

- Alcohol or too much of it and wild partying etc.
- Dishonesty
- Little white lies – these led to Ananias & Sapphira's downfall.

Is there compromise in our lives resulting in us presenting strange fire before the Lord? What do we need to do God is a just God, He does not compromise. Let us not slip into a place of compromise that could put our very lives and eternity at risk.

CONCLUSION

Leviticus reminds us that we have a perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ, He offered Himself without spot or blemish, fulfilling Father God's righteous requirement for sin to be punished.

- Our God is Holy and He has called us to live Holy lives in obedience to Him.
- In Christ Jesus we have all we need to be made holy!

He set our heart on fire when we were born again:

- This fire needs to burn perpetually/continually before our Father.
- This fire must result in a daily prayer life that will please our Heavenly Father and keep us spiritually alive. We need to tend to the lampstands and the incense altars in our lives

We need to be careful that we don't offer strange fire:

- We lose perspective when we mess with the world.
- Compromise will lead to strange fire which can kill us physically & spiritually.

Lord, let Your fire burn in us, stir up those once brightly burning coals that are now just glowing embers, restore the first love in our lives and help us to stay far away from compromise. In Jesus name, amen.