

FEBRUARY 16

Some congratulations are in order. If you've been keeping up, you've now read three books of the Bible. You've probably read more of The Psalms than you did last year, and you're making good headway into Proverbs. The point of all of this reading is connection with God. Like in any relationship, you learn over time, through constant contact and time together in different situations. As we seek to follow Christ in the harvest and in all the changing circumstances of our lives, we need the Word to be constantly flowing through us, to give the Spirit the ability to apply God's thoughts and wisdom to our hearts. Reading the Bible is not a onetime deal, and it is not about learning content and remembering stories. We are seeking God and wanting to know His heart and hear His Word.

Leviticus 1-3

Before I came to Christ, my uncle suggested one time that I should read the Bible. I told him I had tried but I died in the third book. He told me to start in the Gospels. That helped. I relate that story only to say that Leviticus is where a lot of well meaning people "bite the dust" in their effort to read the Bible through. Hang in there. We'll get through it together. If you want to make it more fun, try finding repeated words or phrases to look for; and underline, for example, *pleasing aroma to the Lord*.

Leviticus 1

Vs. 1-2 So, now that the tabernacle is set up, God will teach the people how to approach Him and to live with Him in holiness. The word "holy" when applied to God means both "totally pure and sinless" and "separated." Holiness is what God will be teaching in Leviticus. By the sacrifices, the minds and hearts of the people would be directed to the need for forgiveness before a holy God. In all of the sacrifices and other laws and rituals, they would be reminded that they were a people that God had set apart, separated, to be a witness to the nations.

Vs. 3-17 These burnt offerings had to do with the atoning for sin. This offering was to be completely devoted to the Lord; and therefore, it was completely burned up. This would look forward to Jesus' sacrifice for us for payment of sin and our forgiveness. It is also symbolic of the sacrifice seen in Romans 12:1, representing discipleship in following Jesus.

In this offering a person met the priest outside of the tabernacle courtyard. The priest examined the animal to make sure it qualified. Then the worshiper and the priest went into the courtyard to the north side of the altar. There the worshiper put his hand on the head of the animal and made a declaration of confession of sin or desire to have his sin cleansed. Then the worshiper, not the priest, killed the animal. The priest caught the blood in a bowl and sprinkled the blood on the altar. As the worshiper skinned the animal and cut the sacrifice into pieces, the priest arranged the wood on top of the grate of the altar. The priest then put the pieces on the altar.

As you read this, try to note things that seem interesting. Here are some of mine.

First, these offerings could only be males (picking on males?).

Second, the sacrifices could only be at the tabernacle. This meant if you lived far away, you had to travel, which meant devotion and commitment. There would be no more unrestrained sacrifice. This is why the tabernacle was also called the *tent of meeting*. It was here that they met together with God.

Third, it was a *pleasing aroma*...if done in sincerity for heartfelt forgiveness.

Fourth, the very poorest of people could offer turtledoves or pigeons. You know what famous couple offered this offering right? (Lk. 2:24) Also, Jesus was kind to the pigeons. (John 2:14-16)

Fifth, the entire animal was consumed in fire, meaning that nothing went to the priest for supper.

Sixth, each man had to know how to kill and prepare an animal.

Seventh, in killing the animal a man had to place his hand on its head. That made the act very personal because it showed that the price for the cleansing of sin was the death of an animal that visually (though not really) took the place of the sinner.

Leviticus 2

The *grain offerings* were also burnt offerings and often accompanied the sin offering. It was a way of acknowledging God's provision and grace.

Vs. 1-15 The priests seem to have been able to have some of this sacrifice for supper. The frankincense was added only to that portion that would be burned.

Vs. 4-10 The different ways this grain offering could be presented might suggest the different economic levels of the people who brought them.

Vs. 11-13 These offerings couldn't have yeast since they were burnt offerings, but they all had to have salt. A covenant of salt meant something like "perpetual witness." As the people expressed their thanks to God for His provision or forgiveness, there was to be an element of this declaration that was outward to all people. It is interesting to have Jesus say we are the salt of the earth. As disciples, our thankfulness for our salvation needs to be offered with salt and declared to others.

Leviticus 3

Vs. 1-17 This *peace offering* was also a burnt offering of thankfulness for fellowship with God. Often after the sin offering and the grain offering, there was this offering of communion with God. This offering was accompanied by a feast afterward with the Levites and also with the poor or anyone you wanted to invite. It was a sacrifice of joy and celebration, eaten before the Lord and shared with others.

Notice that this animal could be either *male or female*, and only certain parts of the animal were sacrificed by burning. This allowed for most of the animal to be cooked and eaten.

Vs. 3-4 I don't understand all of the detail here. It's interesting that the people couldn't eat the fat that was attached to the entrails. Why would you want to eat that anyway? I understand not eating raw blood, but they couldn't eat fat that was not on the cooked meat. Maybe among other things, God wanted them to stay healthy.

When I think of this offering I think of Jesus standing at the door knocking, wanting to eat with us. It also makes me think that this isn't a private party. As disciples we need to invite the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame (especially those who are spiritually so) to enjoy what the Lord has shared with us.

When we read what Jesus said about taking up our cross and that unless we renounce everything, we cannot be His disciples, we understand that Jesus is talking about complete sacrifice to Him.

The disciple, Paul, said it best in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Mark 1:29-2:12

Mark 1:29-45

Vs. 29-31 I always smile when I read this. I'm sure the image I have in my mind isn't how it happened; but I can see Jesus entering into the house, a little bit worn out and hungry, and He says, "Peter, do you have anything to eat?" Peter says, "Sure, but my mother-in-law is sick, so I'll have to cook, but don't worry." Jesus looks at Peter rolling up his sleeves and says, "Right. Where's your mother-in-law?"

Mark 1:32-39

Vs. 32-35 This first flurry of activity in Capernaum ends with Jesus, basically, escaping. Note that as exhausted as He was the night before, He got up early before daylight to pray and to avoid the crowds looking for Him.

Vs. 36-37 Peter and the others thought that meeting peoples' temporal needs was the mission. Why would you leave this kind of a crowd?

Vs. 38-39 Notice why Jesus said that He came. The gospel and His mission were always primary in His thinking. God didn't send Him to heal and provide food. The spiritual need of mankind was what He came to meet.

Vs. 40-45 Interestingly, in Leviticus, we are about to read the requirements for the cleansing of a leper. In all the history of Israel since they entered the land, this is the first Israelite we know of who was ever cleansed. And he disobeyed Jesus. You can imagine the historical event this would have been if the man had obeyed Jesus. Even giving testimony to Jesus has to be done according to God's will. This publicity, humanly speaking, hurt Jesus' ministry of preaching in the towns and cities He was sent to, mentioned in v. 38.

Mark 2:1-12

This is the first of the public conflicts that Jesus had with the Jewish leaders. The other Gospels tell us that the scribes and Pharisees who were there were also from Jerusalem. If you want to see how important and memorable this conflict was, read John 5. There are two things that link this passage to John 5. First, the phrase, *take up your bed and walk*, is very important. Also, Jesus refers to Himself there as *the Son of Man*.

As already noted, Jesus' use of the title, *Son of Man*, gave this conflict great intensity; because Jesus was calling Himself the Messiah and eternal king from Daniel 7.

Psalm 35:17-28

When you think of what David went through, you realize how deeply and desperately he needed the Lord. The Lord led David through those hours of fear and years of instability to equip him to write this. But there is more.

V. 17 This is what God was leading David through.

V. 18 This is what God was enabling David to do.

Vs. 19-26 Notice the use of *let*. Now notice how this contrasts to the *let* in v. 27.

Vs. 27-28 This is why the Lord led David through such a dangerous time, so that David could proclaim this to us and so that we might have the steadfastness and encouragement that he was given from God.

Proverbs 9:13-18

Well, we managed to go a few days without this warning, but here it is again. Notice that although this woman named *Folly* is figurative and the opposite of lady *Wisdom*, what is presented here still has the hint of sexual misadventure.

V. 17 The *stolen water* is in contrast to Proverbs 5:15-20.

V. 18 As the Lord describes foolishness, He links it to a man's weakness to sexual adventure. It seems inviting until God introduces *Sheol* (hell) into the fantasy. Even digitally, sexual silliness is just as deadly. I guess the Lord knew we'd need these warnings against the enticement of foolishness even in the digital age.