

Leviticus 1-2 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Recent events at both ends of our nation have given profound evidence of how far our society has fallen into sin.

Massachusetts recently approved homosexual marriage, and the mayor of San Francisco directed the city clerk to issue marriage licenses to homosexuals.

And this *after* the voters of the State of CA approved an amendment to the State Constitution defining marriage as being between a man & woman. Each year, since 1973, a little over 1¼ million unborn children are aborted.

That means that for every 3 children that are born, one is killed. [\[1\]](#)

Pornography is a \$57 billion industry / \$12 billion in the US alone.

That's more than the combined income of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises.

US porn revenue exceeds the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC (6.2 billion).

Child pornography, the fastest growing type of pornography, generates \$3 billion annually! [\[2\]](#)

We can expect sinners to sin. A world that cares nothing for God will not concern itself with moral purity.

But the steady slide of society into deeper and deeper debauchery should be a wake up call to the Church – especially the Church in the United States where Freedom of Religion is in place.

Jesus said that as we followed Him we would be salt & light – our presence would slow & resist the influence of sin & moral decay.

But He warned about the salt losing its saltiness & the light that was hidden away.

This happens when following Him is compromised by a longing to follow the world.

The explosive growth of pornography, sexual immorality, abortion, the acceptance of deviant lifestyles, rampant violence, greed, and a general coarsening of public manners is a disturbing sign that the people of God may have lost their saltiness and their light has nearly gone out.

Really, it's not hard to draw that conclusion when we see church members themselves debating the acceptance of immorality.

As you well know – entire denominations are redefining marriage and their stance on couples living together, as well as homosexual marriage and the ordination of homosexual clergy.

Some groups consider abortion a woman's right & pornography, while not wise, at least is no sin.

No wonder society is sliding more & more rapidly into the moral gutter.

The one influence that resists that moral slide is seemingly out of commission because it is so compromised.

Warren Wiersbe writes,

Whatever else the Christian church may be known for today—great

crowds, expensive buildings, big budgets, political clout—it's not distinguished for its holiness. Bible-believing evangelical Christians make up a sizable minority in the United States, but our presence isn't making much of an impact on society. The salt seems to have lost its saltiness, and the light is so well hidden that the marketplace is quite dark. [3]

Living in this moral setting, the Book of Leviticus is going to seem hard because it's a Call to uncompromising, radical holiness!

Eight times in Scripture, God said to His people, "Be holy, for I am holy!"

Leviticus is a book that teaches us how to avoid sin & how to grow in holiness.

The Book

The Book of Leviticus was the *first book* studied by a Jewish child.

Sad that it's often among the last books of the Bible studied by Christians.

Leviticus is referred to nearly *40 times* in the NT, so it should be of great significance to every Christian.

Some of the key thoughts in the Book of Hebrews cannot be grasped without a clear understanding of their foundations in Leviticus.

Title

The word "Leviticus" comes from the content of the Book.

Levi was the priestly tribe of Israel.

They were charged with the service of the tabernacle and worship of God.

Though the word "Levites" is used only once in the Book (25:32), the entire Book is a manual of instructions they were tasked with carrying out.

Author & Setting

Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible, known as the Torah, of which this is the 3rd book.

Leviticus contains very little historical narrative – it is almost all instructions for the priests.

It was given to him by God as the nation camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, just after the tabernacle was constructed.

The next event that will take place is the census of the people of Israel at the beginning of the Book of Numbers.

Literary Genre

Most of Leviticus read much like a Law Manual because that's what it is, a legal code.

It contains laws governing moral conduct as well as 'case law' which spells out what to do when certain situations arise.

Theology of Leviticus

It's easy to get lost in the details of instructions on the various sacrifices & rituals in Leviticus.

For many it can become just a boring read and doesn't seem to have an relevance to us today.

So as we study, try to remember this: This isn't merely a set of rules by which the people could earn points with God.

It's a picture of the Holiness of God and how we can be in covenant with Him.

Israel didn't initiate their relationship with God.

The Jewish leaders didn't sit down in Egypt one day and say, "Okay, we're going to rebel against our Egyptian masters and leave this place and move northeast to Canaan and take it over."

"So, we need to pick a new God. What do you say; Who shall we choose?"

"Let's pick Yahweh!" "Yeah!!!"

"How shall we worship Him?" "I don't know." "Moses – make up a ritual to worship our new God with."

Israel didn't choose God – God graciously chose Israel. He's the initiator; He came to them & selected them.

And He *gave* them the awesome privilege of being in covenant relationship with Him.

That relationship had to be safeguarded by guidelines.

God is holy & cannot be anything other than holy. To be in covenant with Him means a necessary call to His holiness.

Think of it like a marriage, an image the Bible actually uses to describe the relationship of God & His covenant people.

A man asks a woman to marry him; she consents and they are wed.

After the wedding, their relationship has to follow guidelines of fidelity and mutual care for one another.

The Book of Leviticus is the marriage manual God gave Israel – describing Him and how she could enjoy the covenant with Him.

It also had provisions for how she could return to Him if she foolishly strayed.

Central Theme • The Holiness of God

Theme verse - Leviticus 20:7-8

⁷Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I *am* the LORD your God. ⁸And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you.

I. THE OFFERINGS Chs 1-7

A. *The Burnt Offering* Ch 1

¹Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock.

In chs. 1-7, God gives exacting instructions on the sacrifices & offerings the people could bring *individually*.

Later we'll read of the sacrifices that were to be made *on behalf of the whole nation*.

But these first 5 offerings were given by *individuals*.

Some of them were sacrifices to make *atonement for personal sin*.

Others were offerings made as a way to show a personal desire to be in *closer communion with God*.

The Passover Lamb was the sacrifice that had set Israel apart & stood as the initial mark of their unique covenant relationship with God.

Once that covenant was established, all the following sacrifices merely renewed and deepened the relationship with God.

In the same way – we are saved once for all by the sacrifice of our Passover Lamb – Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 says –

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Through Jesus we enter the New Covenant.

But just like the Israelites of old, we don't always walk in the faithfulness to that covenant; we sin, we stumble, we falter in our walk and abuse the relationship with God.

So we have the blessed provision of 1 John 1:9 –

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

While the whole Nation of Israel there at the foot of Mt. Sinai was *potentially* in a covenant relationship with God because of the Passover and the Exodus – we know that really only a very small remnant had a heart for God and actually took advantage of the offer God made.

What we find in Leviticus are God's gracious instructions for how those whose hearts were tender toward Him could enjoy the fullness of covenant relationship.

The first offering they could bring is spelled out here – *the burnt offering*.

They could bring one of their sheep or cattle.

3¹If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD.

The worshiper was to bring a male of the flock or herd – one that was healthy & whole.

He would come to the curtained gate on the east side of the tabernacle enclosure and present himself and his offering to the priests who would inspect the sacrifice and make sure it was fit to be offered.

God makes it clear that no one who comes with a sacrifice is to feel pressured; it must be offered of one's own free will.

4¹Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

By putting his hand on the offering's head, he was identifying with the sacrifice – and transferring the guilt for his sin onto it which when offered up would provide atonement for him.

In Hebrew, "atonement" means "to smear."^[4]

It pictures the action of taking some of the blood of the sacrifice & putting it on the horned corners of the altar.

It was this act that was the contact point between God & man.

The idea was that the animal was a *substitute* for the one offering it.

He laid his hands on its head in symbolic transfer of his guilt to it.
Then it was killed and some of its blood, symbolic of its life, was placed on the horns of the altar.

This provided a *cover* for the one who brought the sacrifice.

The sin was reckoned as paid for by the death of the sacrifice.

The main picture God wanted to get across to the people of Israel in all this was *the seriousness of sin & the reality of substitution.*

⁵He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that *is by* the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁶And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. ⁷The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. ⁸Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that *is* on the fire upon the altar; ⁹but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

The one who brought the sacrifice was to kill it, bleed it, skin it, cut it up and prepare the pieces for offering. This would be a long & difficult task.

And when he was done, the worshipper would be covered with the evidences of his sacrifice.

This was worship, up close & personal; interactive, participatory.

God wanted those who brought a sacrifice for sin to see first-hand just how great sin's cost is. It costs the life of an innocent substitute.

The entrails & legs had to be washed before burning because they would have dirt & refuse on them & would need to be cleansed before they could be placed in the holy altar.

¹⁰If his offering *is* of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. ¹¹He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. ¹²And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that *is* on the fire upon the altar; ¹³but he shall wash the entrails and the legs with water. Then the priest shall bring *it* all and burn *it* on the altar; *it is* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

¹⁴And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the LORD *is* of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or young pigeons.

¹⁵The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off its head, and burn *it* on the altar; its blood shall be drained out at the side of the altar. ¹⁶And he shall remove its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar on the east side, into the place for ashes. ¹⁷Then he shall split it at its wings, *but* shall not divide *it* completely; and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that *is* on the fire. *It is* a burnt sacrifice, an

offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

Three different kinds of burnt offering are listed.

Bull – sheep or goat – dove or pigeon.

These levels are given because they correspond to the different economic levels of the people.

A bull was pricy & could only be purchased by the wealthy.

A sheep was for the middle class while a bird was for the poor.

But notice that the bigger the sacrifice, the more personally involved the worshiper was!

The rich man who brought a bull did most of the work of offering it.

The middle class man who brought a sheep did a bit less work.

The poor handed their sacrifice over to the priest.

This may be God's way of getting across the idea that those who have much are held to a higher level of responsibility.

It would take about a half a day of intense work to kill, skin, quarter and offer a bull.

Prosperity opens up a whole new realm of opportunity, & opportunity brings responsibility.

Where there is great responsibility there is the potential for great sin. [1 Tim. 6:17-19, James 3:6-7]

The rich man needed to take the time in his offering to think about why his sacrifice was necessary.

So God gave him the opportunity to keep his riches in the right perspective by allowing him to have more hands on participation in the sacrifice.

The poor man merely turned his sacrifice over to the priests who offered it for him.

God was graciously protecting him from the ridicule of his poverty by keeping him from the details of the sacrifice.

In the burnt offering – the entire animal was burnt; nothing was kept back.

This was an offering of total consecration, of complete yieldedness to the Lord.

This sacrifice was meant to be a personal act of ratification of the national covenant God had made with Israel.

It was a person's way of saying; "I don't just want to be a member of the covenant people – I want to be a covenant *person*!"

Yahweh isn't just Israel's God; ***Yahweh is MY God!***

Have you said something similar to that about Christ?

[Church vs. You • Jesus died for world *or* YOU?! • Young people]

B. The Grain Offering

Ch 2

1When anyone offers a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be *of fine flour*. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it.

2He shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn *it* as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by

fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. **3**The rest of the grain offering *shall*

be Aaron's and his sons'. It is most holy of the offerings to the LORD made by fire.

In vs. 1-10, God tells Moses the rules for giving offerings of grain.

Both wheat flour & baked bread offerings could be made.

The grain offering was an act of fellowship with God.

The burnt sacrifice in Ch. 1 was a *consecration offering*, an offering made to mark one's whole-hearted devotion to God.

The grain offering was meant to show one's desire to be in daily communion & fellowship with God.

Grain was the basic staple of their diet. Sharing a loaf of bread was the most obvious way of *sharing life*.

The grain offering was a way for the worshiper to come before God and say, "I just want to hang out with You!"

So here in vs. 1-3, God says it must be made of the best flour, and it's to be mixed with Oil and Frankincense.

Oil is used over and over in scripture as a picture of the Holy Spirit. Incense is a symbol for prayer.

It's by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy intimate communion with God.

And when we abide in the place of communion with Him, then our conversation is continual prayer.

This first grain offering was uncooked flour mixed with oil & incense.

The rest are cooked at home & brought to the temple to offer on the altar.

4'And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil. 5'But if your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil. 6'You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering.

Baked in an oven, the grain offering would be a loaf of bread.

On a pan, it would be like a piece of flatbread, matzo.

Mixing the bread with oil would ensure two things – that it stayed moist, & that it would burn when placed on the altar.

In the same way – it's the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives that keeps us soft & pliable in the Lord's hands.

When we are not experiencing the filling of the Holy Spirit, we become hard and more resistant to the Lord.

It's the presence of the Holy Spirit that brings the holy fire to our lives and empowers us to be witnesses of the Risen Lord, just as He descended on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost in the form of tongues of fire.

7'If your offering is a grain offering baked in a covered pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

The covered pan was a *boiler* – and the bread would come out like a bagel.

8'You shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD. And when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. 9'Then the priest shall take from the grain offering a memorial

portion, and burn *it* on the altar. *It is an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.* ¹⁰And what is left of the grain offering *shall be Aaron's and his sons'*. *It is most holy of the offerings to the LORD made by fire.*

The priest would offer a portion of the grain offerings on the altar; the rest they would keep. This was their portion and the way they were provided for. Notice in both v. 3 & 10, God says the portion of the sacrifices the priests take is “*most holy to the Lord.*”

He wants those who bring their offerings to the altar to realize it wasn't just the portion that was burnt that was holy – it was all holy.

A special gift, something God treasured.

When the priests ate it – it was still holy bread, and they needed to be reverently careful about the way they lived because they were handling things that were holy to the Lord.

In the NT, Paul bases his teaching on the support of full-time Christian workers on the example of the priests who partook of the altar. [1 Cor. 9:13-14]

If the priests were to look at the food they ate as holy, then in the same way, people employed in the Labor of the Gospel today ought to see their support as a holy entrustment from the Lord, and exercise care with how they use it.

11‘No grain offering which you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the LORD made by fire.

As clearly as oil is a symbol in scripture for the Holy Spirit, leaven is a symbol for sin.

Leaven does its work of puffing up by corruption and death; a great picture of sin and its root, pride.

Honey was a favorite offering used among the pagans in the worship of their deities.

It was an artificial sweetener, and God said that when grain offerings were made to Him, they were to be untainted by the corruption of leaven and the artificial sweetness of honey.

The prohibition of these two things represents the truth that in our fellowship with God, we must shun sin and resist the seductive sweet, voices of the world that continually tempt us to define ourselves by the world's standards.

Both Jesus & the Apostle John made it clear – we cannot love both the world and God; it's one or the other.

The one who would be the friend of the world cannot be the friend of God.

Vice-versa: If we would be the friends of God, then we cannot buddy up to the world.

12As for the offering of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma.

God says this *here* to avoid confusion because later in ch. 23 [16-17] He will give direction for the offering of firstfruits, which is also a grain offering and which has leaven in it – but it serves a different purpose and isn't offered by fire.

13And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt;

you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

The same reasons that led to the banning of leaven, *promoted* the use of salt.

Salt was a natural preservative-it resists corruption & decay.

Salt was added to every offering made on the altar.

In the ancient world, salt was thought to be indestructible, even by fire.

Since the sacrifices were all aimed at renewing & deepening the covenant with God, adding salt was a symbol for the permanence of God's covenant.

Salt was such a precious & important commodity in the ancient world many people carried a packet of it with them where ever they went.

A man of little character was considered so worthless, he was said to not be "worth is salt."

When two people were making an important agreement, they would seal it by exchanging a pinch of salt.

Each pinch would be dropped into the other person's salt and mixed together.

This mingling of salt meant an indissoluble bond had been forged.

That's the idea behind the phrase "the salt of covenant."

The point is that God wants all our offerings, all our service, all our life to be lived in the awareness that we are in a special relationship with Him.

14 If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads. **15** And you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it. It is a grain offering. **16** Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: *part* of its beaten grain and *part* of its oil, with all the frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the LORD.

This isn't the same as the *offering of firstfruits* we'll read about later.

This is still dealing with the grain offering.

God is saying that if the flour comes from the first of the wheat harvest, it must be prepared this way.

This was the way the peoples of the ancient world preferred to harvest their grain and prepare it for milling.

They would take the full head as soon as it was ripe, roast it in fire, and then beat out the grain.

When someone's making cookies, do you like to sneak the dough?

Between beating the grains out of the fire-roasted heads, before the grain was milled into flour, they would grab some of the heads and eat them like a snack.

CONCLUSION

5 Times in these 2 chs. we've encountered the phrase – "a sweet aroma to the Lord." [1:9, 13, 17 2:2, 9]

When the offerings were placed on the altar & burned, they ascended into the Lord's presence as a pleasant thing.

They were received by Him with joy.

The burnt offering pictures consecration & devotion to the Lord.

The grain offering represents fellowship with Him.

God takes holy delight in us when we come to Him, offering ourselves to Him & expressing our desire to abide in His presence.

What's your favorite cologne or perfume?

What's your absolutely most delicious fragrance?

Our worship is a sweet & yummy fragrance to God.

[1] http://www.abortionfacts.com/statistics/us_stats_abortion.asp

[2] <http://www.internetfilterreview.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>

[3] Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1994). *Be holy*. "Becoming 'set apart' for God"--Cover.; "An Old Testament study--Leviticus"--Cover. (Le 1:2). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

[4] Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.