

7HEBREWS – LEVITICUS
“Fear & Holiness”
Hebrews 10:19-25
September 17, 2023

Leviticus 17:1-4

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. ³If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, ⁴and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people.¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

I was listening to a report about the nations of Denmark and Sweden responding the recent anti-Islam protests and burnings of the Koran in their respective nations. Stories of protests and jihads being declared with violence to come are spinning while these nations who have for decades promoted their leftward-leaning progressiveness and humanist teachings are struggling to respond. Add the politics and military partnerships with Denmark being part of NATO, along with the Muslim nation of Turkey, and it gets even more interesting.²

There’s much more to the story, but today is not a day to debate Islam, liberal politics, global militarization, or even what these nations should do.

The question that comes to mind when I hear such stories is “Why do certain Muslims respond like this when their holy book is defaced?”

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Le 17:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² NATO. “NATO Member Countries.” *NATO*, 8 June 2023, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm.

No, it's not the same for Christians.

Christianity is profoundly *not* an honor religion. We are never told that it is our duty to defend the honor of the one true, living God. We are to obey the Word and faithfully follow Christ.³ For Muslims...that is different.

Though I vehemently disagree with Islam's beliefs regarding their holy book, and in no way will affirm its teachings, I am taken by the fact that these people view something as special, holy even, to the point they show great reverence for it (even if their way of showing such reverence is far from righteous.)

Reverence – a word for a time far gone it seems. To revere – to set apart – to see things as special, unique, worthy of respect.

Every now and then the word pops up in the news. Headlines stating that certain sports stars of old should be shown reverence. Actors and actresses who are now dead are being discussed as CGI versions of them are appearing in film – the question of reverence appears. When the USS New York was built for the US Navy, part of the hull was made from melted down steel from the World Trade Center. The stories of the reverence the steel workers had for such was well known.⁴

This passage from the Old Testament book of Leviticus is a lead in to the second half of the book. Chapters 17-27 has been called the “Holiness Code” by scholars for years. This focuses upon the lives of those called by God and how their lives are to be communion with him.⁵ God, being holy, requires his people to be holy as well. **Yet, left to our own devices, we have no idea what holiness is.** We miss it. They missed it. Thus, God in his kindness gives a paint-by-number viewpoint on

³ Mohler, R. Albert. “The Briefing.” *Albert Mohler*, 7 Sept. 2023, albertmohler.com/the-briefing.

⁴ Mathews, Kenneth A. *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 147.

⁵ Mathews, 147.

holiness with detailed instructions of what to do, what not to do, and how to view him.

There is a reverence expected by God for the things that are holy.

There is a passion expected for God's people for the holiness of God.

This passion drives us. This reverence centers us. This is who we are to be and gives clarity in a world of mixed messages and even among confusing religious rhetoric.

When I was a junior in high school, in a public high school, we had to read a variety of books, stories, and historic accounts. One assignment was to read the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Puritan pastor Jonathan Edwards. I remember as we were reading it aloud in class, Randy who was sitting behind me would give a play-by-play of the sermon. So, as the teacher began to read "In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites" Randy was saying under his breath "Burn, baby, burn."

Thus, thanks to Randy I have never been able to read this sermon without hearing his voice saying that.

While many think that Edwards was preaching angrily and maybe with sadistic glee to his bewildered congregation, the truth is far from this.⁶ Edwards was living in an era, now identified as The Great Awakening, where the church had adopted what is known as a "halfway covenant" where they attempted to bring in as many in the community under the influence of the church, even baptizing unbelievers who remained unbelievers for the sake of "influence." The halfway covenant was ridiculous. Edwards knew this and thus, his sermon was focused not on the joys of seeing the lost go to hell, but in the compassion of God through his grace so that many may repent and truly be saved. R. Kent

⁶ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 267.

Hughes states that “Edwards gave his people a whiff of the sulphurs of Hell that they might deeply inhale the fragrances of grace.”⁷

This is exactly what the writer of Hebrews was doing in his letter to the church. Built upon God’s revelation of the law, as described in the Old Testament and most clearly in Leviticus as I read, the reverence of the holy and the goodness of God resonates.

As we look to Leviticus and to the book of Hebrews we see these pieces coming together like a puzzle. The heart of God shines through and the old and new covenant are revealed as part of a grander narrative where the author, creator, Lord reigns supreme. As we discover the beauty of worshipping the one, true God, we look today at three distinct things:

1. The Place
2. The Person
3. The Promise

THE PLACE

The passage in Leviticus speaks of a specific place where the Israelites worshipped and offered blood sacrifices for their sins. The prior chapter has delineated the details of The Day of Atonement and this is a continuation.

But, here’s the challenge for 2023 new covenant Christians. We do not have a place as the old covenant Jews did.

Worship location becomes something of a difficulty for many. In the ancient world the place of worship was bound to the identity of the deity who was believed to live in the specific shrine.⁸ For the people of Israel, this was understood as they knew the worship practices of the Egyptians and the other pagan nations. This was par for the course. Even in their

⁷ Hughes, 267.

⁸ Mathews, 148.

own religious experience, the location was evidenced in the Tent of Meeting or tabernacle.

So, the location, the place of worship, the place for meeting with God was understood – it was the tent. Thus, these chapters in Leviticus presuppose that legitimate worship of God could only occur in the authorized place of worship.⁹

Animal sacrifices were to be done. And even this was not unique to worshiping God, as worship of pagan gods often included such sacrifices as well.

It is wise to remember that there were likely no atheists in the ancient world. The fact was that people worshiped something, or someone. In most cases, the worship was of pagan, fertility gods and goddesses created in the minds of people and fueled by the enemy's lies.

But when God revealed the rules for proper worship of him, to his people, he expressed very specific rules for how the sacrifices were to be made and where the worship was to take place. Where the sacrifice was to occur was a measure of the legitimacy of the individual's worship. If the person did not follow the ritual instruction, it was tantamount to denying the claims of God as the Savior of his people.¹⁰

Now, it begins to make sense. The place mattered and the blood mattered. Why? Because God owns the blood of every living creature and for the people to choose to make sacrifices whenever and wherever they chose, by their own desires, it was equal to saying "God...your ways do not matter. You are not the God, the Sovereign over all. I am. And, in my version of logic and rightness, I choose worship as I want." Thus, by choosing this way, even if declaring "the sacrifice is to the one, true God" the worship was sinful and not holy. The place mattered as it was a copy of God's eternal and holy place.

⁹ Mathews, 148.

¹⁰ Mathews, 149.

For Christians, this gets a bit confusing, but we know how our hearts are, right? For centuries, we have built cathedrals, and churches, and used names such as “sanctuary” to describe our holy houses of worship. This leads to a sense of awe, even if misplaced, for a place of worship. Often it leads to a supplementation of place over person and causes great distress when a building is defaced, coffee is spilled, concerts are held, or the building is sold and turned into a museum or community center.

The place of worship was addressed by Jesus when he met with the Samaritan woman by the well as told in John’s gospel.

Christ instructs the woman...and us today in the only legitimate place for Christian worship. The woman brought up a common debate at the time regarding the temple in Jerusalem and Mt. Gerazim where the Samaritans worshiped. Jesus made it clear that neither place was THE place as the new covenant in him was removing the copy and creating access to the eternal.

John 4:23

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ¹¹

This points to the fact that the place of worship which was declared in the Old Testament was a copy of that defined in Christ – the Person of worship.

THE PERSON

The detailed descriptions in Leviticus were to remind the people of God that worship of God alone is allowed and any worship of another god or goddess was false worship and punishable. It would be a breaking of the first and greatest commandment. The Lord their God would become, by

¹¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 4:23). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

their actions, in their minds just another god in a global pantheon of man-made spirit beings.

Yet, God is not to be mocked. The enemy who is the author of confusion and the great imposter cannot and must not be placed on even footing with the great I AM.

Thus, just as the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well was talking to Jesus Christ and sought to deflect her own revelations of sin by debating dogma, so too do many even now ignore the person of Christ in order to discuss minutia that eternally does not matter.

The person of worship, the Son of God, God the Son, the one true, perfect human who is fully human, but simultaneously and eternally fully God has replaced the temporal place defined in the old covenant. This was the plan from before the beginning and for us today, we must grasp this reality.

Leviticus states that the man who has shed blood wrongly, will be held to the bloodguilt of that crime and thus will pay.

Christ has come to shed blood once and for all and through his sacrifice, the bloodguilt of men and women who surrender their lives, confess their sin, repent of their wrongdoing, and turn to Christ alone as their Savior, Redeemer, and Ransom payment will be saved.

The place of worship is the person to worship and he has come to set us free.

Hebrews 10:1

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same

sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.¹²

THE PROMISE

There is so much here, but I will be brief in closing. Simply put, Christ has paved the way and fulfilled all that the law set up and was designed to do. The place of worship...is the person of Christ. Thus, we don't have a to make a pilgrimage to a dot on the map. Yet, do not mishear me. Just because we do not have the tabernacle as our designated place of worship does not mean we can minimize the value of corporate worship, ignore the gathering together of the saints, define what Christianity and Christian worship is based on our likes, dislikes, music preferences, teaching styles, etc. To do so is no different than when the Old Testament Hebrews sacrificed as they chose by justifying their ways apart from God's instructions.

There is a promise made by God to his people. We are experiencing it...but we must not forget it. And this passage from Hebrews 10 is for you and me...Christians today...as much as to the Hebrew believers in the first century.

Hebrews 10:26-39

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 10:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For,

**“Yet a little while,
and the coming one will come and will not delay;
³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith,
and if he shrinks back,
my soul has no pleasure in him.”**

³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. ¹³

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” – a warning to the unbeliever (can you smell the sulphur?)

Yet, also a promise of grace and goodness to the child of God.
Friend...don't miss this.

“For when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 10:26–39). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.