

Intro:

Our communion series is carrying us through the book of Leviticus. I began it largely with the idea of teaching the significance of our Lord's sacrifice for sins as illustrated by the Levitical sacrificial system.

From the sacrificial system, we dealt with the laws of cleanness and uncleanness, which demonstrate the need for our cleansing from sin and culminated last month in the tremendous passage of Lev 16, the Day of Atonement and the access it gains for God's people to God's throne.

We are going to transition into the rest of Leviticus. The rest of the book is called by some, "the Holiness Code". The first chapter we come to is described by one commentator as the 'hinge' between the Levitical system and the Holiness Code. It will highlight some foundational principles behind the penalties and payments for sin.

What do we know about sin from our study of Leviticus?

- Sin is pervasive – it infects every person in every aspect of life
- Sin is corrosive – left unchecked it breeds more sin, left uncleansed, it pollutes others
- Sin is debasing – it leaves a man unfit for the presence of God, for communion with God
- Sin is constant – if the sacrificial system teaches us anything, the constant requirement of cleansing and sacrifice teaches us that sin is constant
- Sin is expensive – it costs a man his very life unless his soul is redeemed by a costly sacrifice

Our chapter today will highlight for us the tremendous cost of sin and the precious nature of our redemption.

We touched on the concepts of this chapter in our morning message from Rm 3.31. The law undergirding these laws in Lev 17 is one that God prescribes for men in almost every dispensation.

Read Lev 17

Our title for this message is:

The Life is in the Blood

Proposition: The Levitical laws of blood speak to universal principles on which redemption from sin depends, for any man and for every man.

I. Pagan sacrifice speaks to a universal but is distinct from the true

- A. The practices of paganism touch on a universal truth (but in corrupted form)
1. The first mention we have of any sacrificial system is in the offerings of Cain and Abel
 - a. Cain's unbloody offering was unacceptable
 - b. Abel's bloody offering was accepted
 - c. Some see this as learned from what God did for Adam and Eve in providing them coats before expelling them from the Garden (likely this is true)
 2. The second mention of sacrifices occurs under Noah who offered burnt offerings to God after the flood (Gen 8.20-22)
 - a. Obviously, thanksgiving is an element of this offering
 - b. But notice the 'sweet-smelling savour' and God's acceptance of the offering
 - 1) The offerings have an expiatory value
 - 2) That is, they atone for sin and cleanse the earth after God's judgement in the flood
 3. All pagan sacrificial systems are derived from a corruption of the revealed system given to Adam and Noah

“Animal sacrifice is the ritual killing of an animal as part of a religion. It is practised by many religions as a means of appeasing a god or gods or changing the course of nature. Animal sacrifice has turned up in almost all cultures, from the Hebrews to the Greeks and Romans and from the Aztecs to the Yoruba.

“Remnants of ancient rituals of animal sacrifice are apparent in many cultures, for example the Spanish bullfights, or kapparos in Judaism, or ritual prescriptions for slaughtering procedures like shechita or ḍabiḥah. Slaughtering lambs is a common practise in Islam (the meat being typically consumed, not burned).”¹

¹ “Animal Sacrifice”, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_sacrifice (Accessed

- a. Muslims offer sacrifices of sheep or goats during the Hajj (pilgrimage) in a time called the *Festival of Sacrifice*
- b. Hinduism sacrifices goats and chickens especially in the worship of the female nature of Brahman
- c. Strangites, a break-away sect of Mormonism practiced animal sacrifice in the past (only require belief in it at the present time)
- d. “In Santeria [Cuban folk religion], such animal offerings constitute a portion of what are termed ‘ebos’ – ritual activities that include offerings, prayer and deeds. The blood of the animals is thought to hold ‘aché,’ or life force.”²
- e. “Some villages in Greece also sacrifice animals to Orthodox saints in a practise known as kourbània.”³

Note this: Blood sacrifice is God’s idea. I offer these examples to show that it is an idea that springs up all over the world as a remnant of a universal truth, known to man by natural revelation, but corrupted by dark hearts that are far from God.

B. The Levitical laws of blood were designed to keep a distance from pagan corruption [the ‘goat-demons’ of Egypt] (Lev 17.1-9)

1. Specifics required of priests and people in Israel (2)

- a. Patriarchal period allowed heads of households to offer independently
- b. The new dispensation requires further ordering and distinction

During the wilderness wanderings, the people rarely ate of their own flocks and herds, preserving them instead for breeding stock in the new land.

- Generally ate manna
- Occasionally might celebrate a fellowship offering on special occasions (or even burnt offerings and sin offerings)

6.6.2009).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

2. Fellowship offerings must be offered only in the tabernacle (3-4)
 - a. No one is to offer an animal independently without priestly supervision
 - b. Failure brings ‘bloodguiltiness’ and the Lord will cut them off from the people (implication: this is forever)
3. Burnt offerings and sin offerings likewise may only be offered in the tabernacle (8-9)
4. The reason: distinction and separation from paganism (5-7)

This distinction speaks to several issues:

- The prevalence of idolatry in the human heart
- The demand for loyalty by our Holy God
- The universal truth concerning the shedding of blood

II. Blood ‘holiness’ speaks to a universal that spans dispensations

Blood holiness refers not only to the proper place and means of offering sacrifice, but it also refers to a distinction from pagans in the use of blood from any animal, and especially from those sacrificed to God.

- A. The Noachic dispensation (Gen 9.1-7, esp. v. 4)
 1. Adamic covenant renewed (1)
 2. Meat added to human diet [possibly not part of the diet before] (2-3)
 3. Blood prohibited from the diet because blood is life and life is from God (4)
 4. Blood ‘required’ – from man and beast (5-6)
 - a. God will require the death of a beast that slays a man
 - b. God will require the death of a man that slays a man

The prohibition from eating blood is connected to this universal principle: life, especially human life, is given by God and cannot be rightly taken by man or beast.

- Eating animal blood dismisses the notion of life from God and is prohibited for men.

5. Adamic covenant renewed (7)

B. The Mosaic dispensation (Lev 7.26-27; Dt 12.16, 23; 15.23; 1 Sa 14.32ff.)

1. Prohibited explicitly in instituting the sacrificial system (Lev 7.26-27)

2. Prohibited in the ‘blood holiness’ passages

a. Here (Lev 17.10-14)

b. In the parallel where the law is modified from wilderness wanderings for dwelling in the land (Dt 12.16, 23; 15.23)

3. Exhibited in the kingdom under Saul (1 Sa 14.32ff.)

C. The Apostolic dispensation (Ac 15.20, 28-29)

The point of surveying the dispensations is to demonstrate that this truth — not eating the blood — transcends dispensations. It is a universal.

- Will you be ‘cut off’ if you eat blood today?
- Remember that we are not under law in terms of its condemnation and penalty, we are under grace.
- But we are still under the demands of law for holiness – it is better for us if we not eat blood (and who likes blood pudding anyway?)

The universal that transcends dispensations, however, is this: the life is in the blood, and we are called to respect life because it comes from God.

III. Blood ‘holiness’ speaks to a universal demanded because of sin

A. The universal truth: ‘life is in the blood’

1. Without blood, no life

2. With the breath of life from God, comes a living being, with blood carrying *oxygen* to every cell in the body

3. No oxygen, no breath, no life – the life is in the blood

The universal truth here is that God gives life, that life is carried on and carried through the body by the breath of life, it is God's to give, and God's to take away.

- Murder, therefore, is wrong.
- Abortion, therefore, is wrong.
- Euthanasia, therefore, is wrong.

Any man who usurps this principle, therefore, is in rebellion to God, the giver of life.

B. The universal demand: death because of sin

1. Adam sinned, in spite of God's warning that sin brings death
2. All men sinned in Adam's sin, so all men die (Rm 5.12)
3. All men sin in themselves, so all men die eternally (Ezek 18.4, 20)

Men in every dispensation are commanded not to eat the blood because 'life is in the blood'.

Men in every dispensation stand condemned, they will not live, they cannot stand, because of sin.

- Universal: the life is in the blood.
- Universal: death is in every life because of sin

But there is one more essential universal: the universal of substitutionary sacrifice...

C. The universal escape: death of a suitable substitute

1. Lev 17 undergirds the entire sacrificial system
 - a. Life is in the blood.
 - b. The sacrifice of one life can pay the demands of sin for another life.
 - c. The life of the innocent, clean, sacrificed life can be imputed to the sinning and condemned life.

2. John the Baptist introduced Jesus this way:

^{KJV} **Jn 1.29** Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

- a. How did Jesus do that? By shedding of blood
- b. What did it mean? Heb 9.22

^{KJV} **Heb 9.22** And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Conclusion:

The laws of blood speak to universal truth.

- The truth that men are sinners
- The truth that death is the consequence of sin
- The truth that only a substitutionary death can cover sin
- The truth that only One Death can truly Atoned for sin forever

Proposition: The Levitical laws of blood speak to universal principles on which redemption from sin depends, for any man and for every man.

Let me close with this question: does the blood of Christ cover you?