

Leviticus and Hebrews

by H.J. Vine

Through Christ, we have nearness to God, access to the Father, and boldness to enter into the holiest, based on His finished work.

Scripture: Leviticus 1:1, Numbers 18:2, Ephesians 2:10, Hebrews 9:24, Hebrews 10:12, Revelation 21:3

Topics: "Old Covenant", "Eternal Redemption"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the nearness and response to God as seen in the book of Leviticus, where the Levites were joined to Aaron, representing the Children of Israel, and kept charge of the tabernacle. This nearness to the Lord is further emphasized in the New Testament, where believers are brought into intimate union with Christ, being members of His body and one spirit with Him. The sermon contrasts the Old Testament practices of sacrifices and offerings with the finished work of Christ, highlighting the eternal redemption and access believers now have to the Father through Jesus, our High Priest.

Transcript

Nearness and Response

One of the great distinctions of this third book of the Bible is found in the name given by Leah to her third son. She called him Levi, which means joined or united, for she said, "Now this time will my husband be joined unto me!"

The near place of the Levites is seen in the fact that they were joined to Aaron (who was of the same family), the high priest who could enter the holiest on the ground of blood-shedding. The Lord said to him, thy brethren of the tribe of Levi shall be "joined unto thee" (Num. 18:2, 4). We are also told that He said of the Levites, "Instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel have I taken them unto Me," and yet they are rarely mentioned separately in Leviticus, where the priests, the sons of Aaron, are prominent.

Joined to Aaron, and representing the Children of Israel, the Levites kept the charge of the tabernacle; and nearness in relation to the presence of the Lord is indicated in Leviticus 1:1, for Jehovah is not there speaking from a burning thorn-bush, or from a quaking mount which filled the people with fear, but "out of the tabernacle"! There His presence was known, there His holiness was vindicated by sacrifice, there response to His redeeming work was shown in sweet-savour offerings, there the high priest bore the names of all upon his breast and upon his shoulders immediately before God; and, in relation to this holy nearness in the tabernacle, every detail of daily life was correspondingly ordered.

In this day of God's saving grace, when the assembly in Christ is being called out, those who have eternal redemption in Him through His precious blood are brought into the reality of what was so strikingly typified in Israel. They were redeemed from Egyptian bondage, and they offered what pointed onward to the present "sacrifice of praise," thanksgiving and worship--the "spiritual sacrifices" which are offered up by Jesus Christ, having been "made nigh" in Him. So intimate is the present nearness, we read, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"; and, "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren"; yea, still more closely are they "joined" or "united" to Himself, they "are members of His body"!

"So nigh, so very nigh to God,

we cannot nearer be,

For in the Person of His Son,

we are as near as He."

Aaron might represent Israel before Jehovah, but the Son of God now brings us into the presence of the Father. Through Him we have access to the Father by the Spirit. "Much more" does "the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God," purge the conscience from the merely "dead works" (like those of Israel) to "serve the living and true God" with the sweet-Savour offerings of praise and worship, for the worshippers of today being once purged have "no more conscience of sins." CHRIST is their one and only High Priest now, and He has "gone into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God FOR US" (Heb. 9:24). Everything in the holiest spoke of Christ in diverse ways. The ark, the mercy seat, the gold, the purple, the scarlet, the fine twined linen yea, and the very tabernacle itself signified His glories in various aspects.

"In Him we every glory view,

Of safety, strength and beauty too;

'Tis all our rest and peace to set

Our Sanctuary, Lord, in Thee"

Contrasting what is now ours permanently with what went before, we find that Leviticus foreshadowed what we have the substance of in Hebrews. It is true, both Leviticus and Hebrews speak of the tabernacle, but the latter of "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man"! Both speak of Moses, but the latter of Him who is "counted worthy of greater glory than Moses"! Both speak of Aaron, but the latter of God's Son, "a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec" who was king as well as priest! Both speak of sacrifices, but the latter of the "one Sacrifice for sins" which needs no repetition! Both speak of sacrifice for sin, but the latter of Him who "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"! Both speak of offerings to God, but, while the former speaks of the priest that "standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices," the latter tells of Christ who offered one sacrifice and "sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12, N.Tr.)!

"In God's own presence now for us

The Saviour doth appear,

The saints as jewels on His heart,

Jesus doth ever bear."

The beautiful prefigurings given to us by the Holy Spirit in Leviticus help us greatly to understand the present things which are ours in Christ. Great indeed, however, are the contrasts between, the two! In the offerings of old God found no pleasure, we are told, but in the one perfect offering of Christ He has found complete satisfaction! There was no seat provided for the priest of old, but God said to His Son, "Sit Thou on My right hand"! The One who offered Himself has now the most exalted seat in the universe, and He is our "GREAT PRIEST over the house of God"! Perfect is the peace, eternal the rest and holy the boldness which are consequently ours in His presence. God's holiness has been perfectly met in the one Sacrifice! He can therefore say of us, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember NO MORE"! in contrast to the "remembrance again made of sins every year" (Heb. 10:3), the worshippers today being "once purged," as we said, have "NO MORE conscience of sins" (v. 2)! and so satisfactorily has the work been done in regard to which Jesus has sat down, the Holy Spirit conclusively declares, "There is NO MORE offering for SIN"! No more remembrance of sins on God's side! No more conscience of sins on the worshippers' side! No more offering to be made on Christ's side! Leviticus pointed on to a work to be done! Hebrews points back to a work finished! and also points up to the Completer of that work!

"High at God's right hand is seated

Christ, the Lord, the living One,

All His toil on earth completed,

All His work for sinners done.

In the glory,

See Him! God's Eternal Son!"

It took both Moses and Aaron to typify Christ, for He is both the Mediator and the High Priest; and, like Moses who spoke on God's part, God's Son has spoken the words of God; also, like Aaron who represented the people before God, Jesus represents us in His presence now. Moses and Aaron adorned with the garments of glory and the holy crown went inside together, so Christ has gone into heaven itself. He is the Holy One there, and He is there for us. Moreover, so great is He, where two or three are gathered together unto His Name He Himself is present. Visible glory filled the tabernacle in the wilderness, but Jesus Himself is in the midst of His own who are rightly gathered today. Faith recognizes His presence before we see Him in glory, and boldness is ours even now to enter into the holiest, boldness by the blood of Jesus! Full assurance of faith gives us to enter where He is.

Jehovah spake to the people by Moses, "Ye shall be holy: for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). Every detail was ordered according to that. The without was to correspond with the within.

In chapter 1:1 He speaks "out of the tabernacle," and in the last chapter all estimation is "after the shekel of the sanctuary" (27:3) The book begins with the burnt-offering ascending as a sweet savour to the Lord wherein the offerer is "accepted," and it closes with persons and things being "holy unto the Lord"--the words "the Lord's" and "holy unto the Lord" being repeated over and over again. This nearness and the response to Him are expressed in abundant offerings to the Lord, and in the divinely ordered details which

He gave of instructions as to sweet-savour offerings and others also prefigured the work of Christ by which we draw nigh as worshippers today; and the ways which are well pleasing in His sight take character from this. In the case of Israel, Leviticus instructed them as to the minutest details, as to priestly consecration, as to food, uncleanness, relationships, separation, land, houses, cattle, etc., but in regard to the redeemed today much stands in contrast to what was said to Israel; and we read in Ephesians 2:2:10 that "we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." The practical details given in Ephesians flow from the knowledge of saving grace, whereas those in Leviticus from law; nevertheless they pointed forward to the "better" things of which the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks.

When the glorious consummation of the wonderful designs of God is fully reached, we read, "Behold THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God," Near to Him then for ever, there will be a full response to God in love and holiness, in praise and worship, and in every beautiful detail of living activity amidst scenes of stainless glory. All will be intimately and eternally "JOINED" TOGETHER in abiding splendour and grace.

Surveying the vast extent of the divine designs opened before our view, we see that the ruin in Genesis yielded the redemption in Exodus, and the redemption in Exodus yielded the tabernacle approach of Leviticus, which indicated vividly the present realities made ours through faith, and in the Spirit's grace and power--realities entered into by faith now, and soon to be actually displayed in counselled glory, when God's tabernacle is seen shining forth in heavenly brightness and blessedness.

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