

Leviticus 4-6

Moving on from the three types of sacrifices written about in the first three chapters...

Leviticus 4

What stood out to me as I read this chapter was not only the emphasis placed on a “sin offering,” but that forgiveness was given through each of the types of sacrifices mentioned here.

Many people think the God of the Old Testament is a mean and angry God, looking for a reason to punish sin. But what you have here is God going out of his way to make forgiveness possible for a number of different types of sinners.

The question that was raised in my mind while I read this chapter was: why not just have one type of sacrifice to atone for sins? Why have different kinds of sacrifices for different kinds of people?

And while the text does not tell us explicitly why different sacrifices for sin are proscribed for different types of people, I have several possible reasons:

- The kinds of sins committed by the different groups require a different kind of atonement; a different kind of repentance exemplified by a different kind of sacrifice.
- Sins committed by people of certain standings (such as leaders of the people) are different from other people because of the effects they have on other people.
- Different types of sacrifices were offered so that the other people in the courtyard area would know what the person was seeking atonement for.

Leviticus 5

Motivation plays a large role in today’s discussions of morality. If someone did not mean to do what they did, somehow it is less offensive or wrong than if they intended to do so all along. It’s the difference between First Degree Murder and Involuntary Manslaughter.

But notice how God’s Law handles “intent,” or motivation.

On the one hand, intent or motivation does not remove the guilt from a person's sin. The one who accidentally commits a sin or becomes unclean is instructed to make a sacrifice of atonement for what they have done. "But I didn't mean to," is not an excuse.

On the other hand, notice how God inspired an entire chapter of scripture to give detailed instructions how accidental, un-repent-ed-for-in-good-time sins came be atoned for.

What we can take away from this chapter is the impossibility of keeping the law perfectly. What we can also take away from this chapter is the zealotry of the Lord to make a way to atone for the sins of his people.

Leviticus 6

6:1-7

Financial sin is still sin. Notice how it is important for restitution (120% of the amount unethically obtained) to be made to the person wronged AS WELL AS atonement made before the Lord. Sins against his people are sins against him. What we do with our horizontal relationships also impacts the vertical relationship we have with God.

6:8-13

Why would it matter that fire be kept burning on the Lord's altar continually? Could it possibly point to a continual need for the altar to be accessible (or even in use) all the time? And wouldn't this point out the abject sinfulness of the Israelites?

Notice, also how even the details of disposing of ashes from the altar are given divine consideration. Not only does this point to the dignity of all human work, but it also shows that, to the last detail, the work of atonement is serious and to be taken seriously. For if the disposing of the ashes from the altar is a regulated and divinely mandated thing, how much more the sacrifices before they are turned to ash!

6:14-30

The consuming of things sacrificed is also a serious deal.

The overarching theme here seems to be that of reverence and respect for the things used for sacrifices and atonement. Comparisons to today's church could be made (in an indirect way) to how we treat communion vessels. They are not magical, but they are to be treated with respect because of their purpose and how they have been used.