Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross Lesson 1: Worship at the Cross

Anchor Verse: For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.~Leviticus 17.11

Key Verses: "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock." ~Leviticus 1.2

...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...~Hebrews 1.2-3

Imparting wisdom to the next generation is a heavy task. However, it is crucial that children know that should they fall asleep with their gum still in their mouths, it is likely to fall out of their mouth and become glued into their hair. There are many, many supposed remedies for removing gum from a child's hair, but in the end it requires a decent pair of scissors, followed by a memorable haircut (cue the camera!) The gum creates a crisis, but the source of the crisis isn't the gum. Instead, disobedience, or ignoring wisdom and instruction, creates a crisis which requires a resolution that is both punitive and offensive. Adam and Eve's disobedience severed their ability to continue to enjoy God's presence, or to **worship** God. But God provided an *eternal* resolution through **God the Son**. God's plan of redemption was carried out in the punitive and offensive sacrifice of His Son, Jesus the Christ, so that we may revel in the presence of God (worship). Thanks be to God!

Lord God, we come before You in humility and in wonder of what You have for us as we study Your law and Your Son this year. Open our minds to You as we read Your Word. Holy Spirit, bring it to life in our hearts and our minds. Increase our knowledge and our faith through this lesson. Please accept the time we spend thinking, praying, and pondering You as an offering and act of worship of You.

Leviticus 1.1-2 The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.

Hebrews 1.1-4 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Diamonds:

1. God's instruments for His instructions/teachings in this week's passages are unique to their time period within God's fulfillment of His plan to restore His people back into a familial relationship with Him. Contrast how God is speaking, along with what God is saying in this week's passages (Leviticus 1.1-2 and Hebrews 1.1-4):

The hard contrast in God's instruments for His commands correctly implies a crisis: humanity is no longer living in the presence of God or living in worship of God. At the beginning of time, God walked with His creation daily, communing with His good works. God created man (Adam) on His sixth day of Creation (Genesis 1.26-31). Adam's daily living included reveling in the glory of God, of immersion with God's physical presence (Genesis 2.8,15; 3.8), as well as living at rest in the splendor of God's *original* Creation alongside his Handcrafted (Genesis 2.20-25), gorgeous wife, Eve. God provided wisdom to Adam by instructing Adam and Eve to not eat

of one of the trees in their splendid, produce-filled garden: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2.16-17).1

2. Genesis 3 tells us about Adam and Eve's willful rebellion against God (often referred to as "the fall"). God pronounces curses against Satan, Eve, and Adam. What actions does God take in Genesis 3.23-24?

3. Imagine you are a first-hand witness to the dramatic events of Genesis 3.23-24 between God, His Handcrafted man and Handcrafted woman. Using the creative gifts of the Holy Spirit, how do you imagine the intensity of this scene, as well as the emotions and thoughts Adam and Eve experienced during and after God's actions? Prayerfully consider how God experienced this dramatic expulsion. How do you think He may have felt in carrying out these actions²?

<u>Deity</u>: God the Son~ (Hebrews 1.2-3) This title references a distinctive and unrepeatable relationship between God the Father and His Son, Jesus the Christ. It is most often used in reference to the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) which describes the "Godhead" that "possesses the entire simple (undivided) essence of God."³

The Bible teaches us that each member of the Trinity carries specific works: the Father as Creator (Genesis 1.1; 1 Peter 4.19); the Son as Redeemer and Mediator (Romans 3.24; Ephesians 1.7; Hebrews 1.3; 1 Timothy 2.5); and the Holy Spirit as the agent of sanctification (2 Thessalonians 2.13; 1 Peter 1.2). This broad (over) simplification of the theology of the Trinity is summarized as, "the *plan* of redemption is attributed to the Father, the *accomplishment* of redemption is attributed to the Spirit."⁴

4. What do we learn about God's Son, Jesus, in these first four verses of Hebrews?

The emphasis of the opening of Hebrews is the supremacy and superiority of Christ. Securing this foundational truth opened the Jewish reader's mind to listening to the faith-building exhortations that are the focus of Hebrews. More than persecution for being followers of Christ, they were experiencing a consequential existential crisis: reduce Jesus to a superior angel and/or superior prophet to keep living within their Jewish community or face total exile and banishment in declaring Jesus as God's own Son, Messiah or the Christ. In other words, keep enjoying your home, your social circles, your synagogue community, and your current employment/income,

¹God's instruction was only to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After they did and their eyes were opened to good and evil, God mercifully kept them from eating of the tree of life, lest they live forever in the presence of evil (Genesis 3.22).

² 1 Corinthians 2.11 teaches us that we cannot discern God's thoughts. However, 1 Corinthians 14.15 requires that we think about God using His Spirit, using the opportunity He has given us to commune and think in Him! Prayerfully ponder using His Spirit, and boldly ask Him to help you understand this moment.

³ MacArthur & Mayhue, "Biblical Doctrine" pp.191-207

⁴ MacArthur & Mayhue, "Biblical Doctrine" pp.191-207

or upend all your security, friends, family, and income because of Christ! We think "church shopping" and/or moving is stressful, yet in this time period, followers of Christ lived in the reality of deportation!

5. Considering the reality of the hard cost for those who proclaimed Jesus as Messiah, God's Son and Savior, why do you think the writer of Hebrews opens his "sermon" of exhortation by establishing the supremacy and superiority of Jesus? How would the list you created in Question 4 shape your willingness to be deported, banished, and exiled from your community?

The title God the Son explains "the superiority of Christianity to the old covenant religion"⁵. God the Son, Jesus the Christ, is the complete revelation of God who fulfills the Old Testament, or old covenants, requirements so that we may worship God, *eternally* secured in His presence. "[Jesus] is prophet in that He perfectly reveals God to us. He is priest in offering Himself for our sins, cleansing us, and interceding for us with God. He is our King, reigning now in heaven and ruling over us as our Sovereign Lord."⁶

- 6. Jesus' supremacy is also identified in His reconciliation and unification of the divided roles God established: prophet, priest, king. How does Hebrews 1.1-4 introduce you to these 3 unique roles:
 - a. Prophet
 - b. Priest
 - c. King

<u>Doctrine</u>: Worship⁷~ (Leviticus 1.2) offering of homage, honor, and praise to God. Worship is the theme of salvation history, the supreme purpose for which believers were redeemed (John 4.23), and the occupation to which all will be eternally enthralled (Revelation 19.1-6; 22.3-4).

The laws in Leviticus are the foundation upon which God's people worship God. Every time you read the word "offering", replace it with the word "worship". In other words, *every* offering is an act of worship, making these two unique words interchangeable!

7. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. Interestingly, its focus is worship through the writer's love of God's "rules", "commandments", "precepts", and "statutes". Which verses in Psalm 119 help you understand the connection between worship and love of God's commands?

⁵ Phillips, p.13

⁶ Phillips, p.17

⁷ MacArthur & Mayhue, "Biblical Doctrine" pp. 790-792

To worship the Lord is to ascribe to Him the honor, glory, adoration, praise, reverence, and devotion that is due Him, both for His greatness and for His goodness (Isaiah 42.8; 48.11; Matthew 4.10; Revelation 14.7). The...worship of angels, saints, or other supposed deities constitutes idolatry, and is strictly prohibited in Scripture (Exodus 20.3-5; Colossians 2.18; Revelation 19.10, 22.9; Westminster Confession, Chapter 21, paragraph 1).

True worship must begin in the heart and the mind of the worshipper...God accepts only that which flows from sincere devotion to Him...For believers, the supreme act of worship is to offer all of themselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord (Matthew 22.37). Genuine worship engages the mind; it does not bypass it (1 Corinthians 14.15). Worship encompasses much more than the singing portion of a church service; it is a way of thinking and living for God's honor and glory (Romans 12.1-2).

God's laws are "an expression of [God's] values." What a treasure to study a book that allows us to know God's heart better. Knowing that God's laws are difficult to understand in 2024, we commit to providing you a thoroughly researched understanding of God's heart through each of His laws. Likewise, Jesus came to fulfill several of His Father's laws, and offers an even deeper understanding of God's heart through His ministry while on earth. Therefore, as we study Leviticus, we will also study how Jesus personally addressed, reinforced, and/or fulfilled God's law. It is our prayer that the laws are less academic, confusing, and revolting as we join the crowds watching Jesus fulfill them and explain them while touching the untouchable, curing the incurable, and the overwhelming compassion He felt as He looked upon His helpless people (Matthew 9.36).

8. Read Leviticus 1.1-2 aloud, replacing the words "offering" with the word "worship". How does this exercise reframe your understanding of God's command in this verse (you may need to repeat yourself a few times!)? What thoughts about worship does this exercise reveal? What are you learning about God through interchanging these words?

<u>Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer</u>: Every week, we ask you to write out a scripture verse found in any portion of the lesson. As you write it, modify it by filling in your personal name, your situation, or any other modification that engages you to consider God. You will NOT be expected to share the exact details of your prayer.

However, your group will be exponentially blessed and encouraged as you choose to share any portion of your prayer every week. Truly, do NOT miss out on God's blessing for you and for your sisters-in-Christ by skipping this section or remaining silent week after week.

Freely use this example or boldly (and bravely!) write using a different verse from this week's study that God has seared into your heart and mind:

Leviticus 1.1-2 + Hebrews 1.1-4 + Psalm 119:

Prophet, Priest, and King, I worship You. I praise You for speaking to all Your people through many instruments over time. I praise You for Your Law because it reveals Your pursuit of Your people.

⁸ Sklar, p. 57

[Praise God using a variety of verses from Psalm 119. Question 7 may be a guide for this, or you may find a different section of Psalm 119 better expresses your heart. Weave your circumstance, name, and/or specific gratitude using Psalm 119]

Increase my faith in my King, who sits at Your right Hand. Challenge my mind to meditate on Your law in view of Your Son's fulfillment of it. Give me courage to boldly ask Your Spirit to teach me when I don't understand Your law, and when it is offensive to me. Thank You for Your Son, Your Heir, whose inheritance includes me! May my offering this day, my worship of You in all I do, please You, My King and Savior. Amen.

Hughes, R. Kent, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) pp.15-37 MacArthur, J. & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine*, A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2017) Mathews, Kenneth A., *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009) pp.17-28 Morales, L. Michael, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) pp.15-143 Phillips, Richard D., *Hebrews*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006) pp. 5-25 Sklar, Jay, *Leviticus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014) pp. 9-11, 27-76, 85-89

Lecture Outline:

Aim: Living with Christ's Cross in view cultivates an awareness of God's presence.

- I. The Shadow (Leviticus 1.1-2) **TR1:** Cultivating an awareness of God's presence is only possible through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.
 - a. How often are you aware of God's presence in your day-to-day life? Is it an occasional awareness or a perpetual awareness?
 - b. What do you need to do to cultivate a more acute awareness of God's presence WITH you?
- II. The Savior (Hebrews 1.1-4) **TR2:** Cultivating an awareness of God's presence deepens our knowledge of His character and ignites genuine worship.
 - a. How well do you know God's character?
 - b. Which of God's character traits has His Son Jesus revealed to you in the Bible?
 - c. How might those character traits cultivate a more genuine worship of the One True God?