

What's the Message? – Lesson 31

We continue our study of the Torah, the five books of Moses . . . with a look into Law and Gospel.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. As always, we pray that the Lord will open your hearts and bless you through this study, and enable you to see that His Promises have always carried with them the dual elements of Law and Gospel. Amen.

We begin with the Book of Leviticus. And Teacher, I must say right up front that this book is one that appears to be so out-of-date with respect to our times, that it is hard to imagine that there can be any lessons here that would apply to us. I mean, Leviticus gives us detailed instructions on the proper performance of quaint, old, and obsolete practices of sacrifice, sacrifices that are no longer performed today. So what is here for us?

Ah, but the simple description of Leviticus you just made is the very reason why we should take a closer look, for there is here a far greater importance than what most people see on the surface. In order to make it all clear and in context, I must begin to answer you by going back to our first studies in Genesis.

God gave Adam and Eve a perfect home and required of them only that they should trust Him and obey Him. They failed, and their descendants likewise failed. Then God started over with Noah and required the same thing of him and his family. In short order they also failed. Much later God found a man that, although not perfect, was one willing to listen to God . . . this was Abraham. And God made a covenant with Abraham, as we saw in Genesis, chapter 12 . . . *I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing* to others.

Yes I remember that. And I also remember that God then selected particular men from the families of the first three generations that followed, men who would carry on the Word of The Lord. But then came a time, during their slavery in Egypt, that the trust and obedience in God weakened, and God had to send a new leader, Moses.

Yes, and the generation of adults that Moses led out of Egypt had to learn this lesson of trust and obedience all over again. But how could Israel be a blessing to others, if it could not first be faithful to God? How could they first deal with their own actions and failures? There had to be a way out of the morass of sin. Now, Leviticus tells us what that way was.

What you see at first when you begin reading Leviticus is a series of instructions regarding burnt offerings, cereal, offerings, peace offerings, and sin offerings. But what is the purpose? Why are these being done? Go to chapter 4, the last part of verse 20, and read with me . . . *and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.*

Is this a one-time statement, something not important? Let's see if we can find some more examples. Stay in chapter 4 and go to verse 26. What do you read?

Each time it says . . . *so the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.*

Go to verses 31 and 35 of chapter 4 and you will see the same statement repeated. This theme then continues throughout chapter 5 with the same statement of atonement in verses 6, 10, 13, 16, and 18. So it is emphasized as important.

In fact, we see this same phrase of atonement frequently throughout the entire book, but particularly in the first 15 chapters. Let me suggest that our listeners go through the first 15 chapters and mark all the mentions of "atonement" they see. Now how would we characterize this statement? Is it Law, or Gospel? In fact, it is both. Let me explain that. What do you read in Chapter 5, verse 17?

If anyone sins, doing any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity.

What you have read is a statement of Law. Right? But every time you read a similar statement of the Law here, there soon is a statement of Gospel in the words, “the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.” This is clearly a statement of the mercy and love of God, a statement of “good news”. And good news is what the word “Gospel” means, the good news of the forgiveness of our sins by our Heavenly Father.

So the Book of Leviticus is not just an obsolete book of law after all. What I see now is . . . it is the message of the Gospel given in the Old Testament, and is just as applicable today as it was then!

But there is one more point we need to add. Recall that I started this study by taking us back to God’s covenant with Abraham, that he was to be a blessing to others. There is no way Israel could be a blessing to others if they were burdened by the guilt of their own sin. Their sins had to be forgiven to enable them to be the blessing they were called to be. And God provided that way. How much more we should be a blessing to others in our time, for we have a more perfect way to forgiveness in Jesus, our Savior. As it is written in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 14: *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

We are truly blessed, to be a blessing.

Next time we shall look into the significance of The Day of Atonement.

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