



# Faith Pulpit

## Transform the Bones of the Word into Meat

As the Ethiopian Eunuch was returning home from Jerusalem, he was pondering the predictions of Isaiah 53. His two questions to Philip reflect common difficulties in gaining insight into confusing portions of Scripture: (1) How can I (understand what I read) except some man should guide me? (2) Of whom speaks the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?

God sent Philip to the spiritually hungering eunuch so that he might come to know and trust Jesus Christ as his Savior. Philip opened his mouth and began from that same Scripture to preach unto him Jesus (Acts 8:35), that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. After a straightforward explanation of the Biblical text, a passage which had been bones before became milk and meat to bring a lost soul to salvation.

One of the Old Testament books most frequently viewed as bones is Leviticus. The study of Leviticus tends to be neglected because the book lacks action and plot—except for the dramatic judgment of Leviticus 10, if a person were to read that far! Leviticus contains hundreds of seemingly antiquated rules and regulations, with much dry repetition of legal and sacrificial phrases. The symbols seem difficult to interpret and apply, and the world of sacrificial worship and legal regulation seems very far removed from our day.

### 1. The Importance

When one considers the widespread neglect of personal Bible study today, he can understand why Leviticus is so neglected. Although we may avoid the reading, study, and use of this book, it surely must have been one of the Scriptures used by the Lord Jesus with the two men on the road to Emmaus when, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27).

Leviticus deserves our diligent study, for it contains a higher percentage of the direct words of God than any other Bible book. God spoke at a very crucial time in human history. Genesis covers thousands of years and Exodus more than 80 years, but Leviticus covers only one month. Understanding the importance of Leviticus can change its appearance from that of bones to that of spiritual milk and meat.

Leviticus reveals the sacrificial basis for salvation and fellowship with God (a truth often forgotten in witnessing and in appreciating the priesthood of each believer). Its types prefigure the work of Christ in salvation. The various offerings provide a key for understanding God's plan of salvation through the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29). In fact, we cannot fully understand the book of Hebrews without studying Leviticus.

Today we need a renewed emphasis on the holiness of God—a central teaching in Leviticus. A sinner must admit the exceeding sinfulness of his sin before his alienation from God can be removed by personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Although Leviticus describes God's will for Israel under the dispensation of Mosaic Law, its details can open our eyes to the wonderful position we have in Christ in the present Age of Grace. The book teaches basic truths about God, man, salvation, and the life of faith and obedience. Leviticus teaches that "it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul" (17:1); it also is the ONLY Old Testament book which declares the obligation to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Many theological nonconservatives, who claim to be Christians while denying Gospel truths, inconsistently ignore or deny the necessity of blood atonement while they accept the love passage.

## **2. Its Application**

Leviticus has balance between basic principles and detailed applications. Careful study will stimulate the spiritually sensitive mind. Universal, timeless principles discernable in Levitical laws remind the Christian to please God in daily living—a theme prominent in the New Testament epistles. For example, the dietary laws given to Israel and the regulation of vows can remind the New Testament believer-priest of his need to live out his faith in all areas of everyday life. Personal salvation must come first, then growth, service, and soulwinning.

You can use Leviticus to enhance your own personal Bible study and to enrich and deepen your ministry in the lives of others. Study and preach from Leviticus in a balanced way. You will discover that Leviticus is truly a central book to the theology of the Bible. The God-given Mosaic Altar and Mosaic Tabernacle anticipate the entire sequence of Israel's seven Sanctuaries: the Mosaic Tabernacle, the Solomonic Temple, the Restoration Temple, the Herodian Temple, the Tribulation Temple, the Millennial Temple, and the Eternal State (enjoying God directly).

Each basic category of sacrifice reflects an aspect of the meaning of the death of Christ. You value the Christian's High Priest more fully when you understand God's plan for forgiving sins and providing access to fellowship with God. Christ is our High Priest, and we serve as priests under Him. The leprosy legislation in Leviticus pictures sin and salvation.

The prophetic program for Israel shows itself in the literary sequence and typology of Leviticus. The Feasts of Israel (Lev. 23) outline symbolically the major events in God's program for and through Israel. The curses of chapter 26 describe stages of increasing severity in God's discipline, that ultimately purifies Israel so that the remnant might receive the long-promised blessings.

## **Conclusion**

Begin to notice how many times the New Testament refers to Leviticus, and you will begin to transform the bones of the Word into meat. Your study may be difficult at first, but gradually you will discover an amazing transformation. Because Leviticus is the product of verbal, plenary inspiration, the Holy Spirit will enable you to discover profitable personal truths: Christ loved more and God told more about His will than I had ever dreamed before.

Like the Ethiopian Eunuch, you may need someone to help you see the truths embedded in Scripture. Use Samuel H. Kellogg's *The Book of Leviticus* (occasionally reprinted) and J. Vernon McGee's commentaries, which draw on Kellogg. Most commentaries provide only occasional help. Study the Scriptures themselves, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and take a course on Leviticus at FBTS if you can.

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