

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS LESSON 10 LEVITICUS CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

Leviticus 17 introduces the second major part of the book (chapters 18-25), which is commonly called **the Holiness Code**. While chapters 1-16 deal with ritual laws relating to public life and worship, chapters 18-25 deal with regulations concerning personal and private matters of a person. Leviticus 17 serves as a link between the two halves of the book.

The chapter falls neatly into three sections. The first section concerns the slaughtering of clean domestic animals for consumption (vv.1-9). The second section concerns the eating of blood (vv.10-14). The third section deals with the partaking of the meat of dead animals or animals that had been injured by other beasts.

Although many of these laws have no direct applications today, they do provide many great spiritual lessons and valuable insights for our understanding of the New Testament.

OUTLINE

- A. The Slaughter of Cattle, Sheep, and Goats for Personal Consumption and for Peace-Offerings (17:1-9).
 - 1. The LORD told Moses to speak to Aaron, his sons and the children of Israel (vv.1-2).
 - 2. Anyone who slaughtered an ox, lamb, or goat and did not offer it as a peace offering to the LORD would be excommunicated (vv.3, 4).
 - 3. The purpose was to stop the children of Israel from offering their sacrifices to demons (vv.5-7)
 - 4. This rule also applied to non-Jews who lived with them (vv.8, 9).
- B. The Eating of Blood Was Forbidden (17:10-14).
 - 1. The children of Israel, as well as any strangers who lived with them, were forbidden from eating blood (v.10).
 - 2. The reasons for this were (vv.11, 12):
 - a. The life of the body is in the blood.
 - b. The blood was for making an atonement for the people.
 - 3. Anyone who ate meat must drain out the blood (v.13).
- C. The Eating of Animals That Died Naturally and Animals Torn by Beasts (17:15-16).
 - 1. The person could eat the meat of an animal that died naturally or an animal that was torn by beasts but he must wash his

clothes, bathe himself and be unclean until the even (v.15).

2. The penalty for disobedience was that he would have to bear his own iniquity (v.16).

COMMENTARY

The LORD called Moses and instructed him to speak to Aaron, his sons and to all the children of Israel (vv.1, 2). The laws that the LORD would give to them were not only for Moses, Aaron and his sons but for the whole nation of Israel.

Slaughter of Domestic Animals

An Israelite, who wished to eat meat, must slaughter his chosen animal, either an ox or a lamb or a goat at the entrance of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. These animals were used for sacrificial offerings to the LORD. In other words, if the chosen animal was one of these, he must kill the animal at the door of the tabernacle. The priest would sprinkle the blood on the brazen altar, take the fat and burn it on the altar as a peace offering (ch. 3). The rest of the meat would be given back to the person. The breaking of this commandment would render the person guilty of bloodshed and the penalty was that he would be “cut off” from among his people (v.4).

The reason for imposing this commandment upon the children of Israel was to prevent them from being drawn into making “sacrifices unto devils” as practised by the pagan nations. Among the pagan nations of the Ancient Near East, the slaughter of animals was linked to sacrifices to their gods. The imposition of this law would prevent Israel from breaking the first commandment of idolatry and spiritual

darkness. At the same time, it would distinguish Israel from all the other nations. Some felt that “God is demanding that they bring Him to the dinner table “ and by this token shut out the heathen gods!¹ God considered Himself as “a husband” to Israel and for Israel to commit idolatry was to go “a whoring” after other gods. This was committing spiritual adultery. This commandment was required not only of the children of Israel but also those “strangers” or foreigners who lived with them (v.8).

We do not envisage a long queue of Israelites, in their sojourn in the wilderness, bringing their animals and waiting at the door of the tabernacle for their turn to kill their animals. This law could be carried out when the people lived close to the tabernacle which was precisely the situation during the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. In addition, the eating of meat among the common people was a luxury in those days. This commandment was relaxed after their settlement in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 12:20-27). It would be difficult for the Israelites to travel long distances to the temple to slaughter the animals.

No Eating of Blood

One more rule that must be strictly kept concerned the blood of animals. The children of Israel were forbidden from eating the blood of the animals at all times. Our thoughts reflect back to Genesis 9:4—“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat”. God has imposed this rule against eating blood right from the beginning and reiterated it in Leviticus. Among many eastern people, like the Chinese, blood of pigs and chicken in

¹ McGee, *Thru the Bible*, vol. I:404.

coagulated form is a favourite. As Christians, we must not eat blood because God says so. The reason against eating blood is because “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (v.11). Blood is used as an atonement for the souls of God’s people. Hence, the commandment is very clear: “No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood” (v.12). Any Israelite, who hunted animals for food, must drain out all the blood before eating (v.13).

Rules About Hunting Wild Animals

The people of Israel could hunt wild game. These wild animals were not offered in sacrifice regardless of where they were killed. The only imposition in hunting wild game was that the blood must not be consumed. The implication was that the meat could be eaten whether the animals died naturally or were hurt by other beasts. But the meat rendered the person unclean until the evening. He must wash his clothes and bathe.

PRACTICAL VALUE

As mentioned, although some of these laws could not be directly applied, they are used to teach us many important timeless spiritual insights that will help us in our walk with and service to the LORD.

God is holy and His commandments must be obeyed. He does not want us to stray away from him through ignorance or wilful disobedience. If we do the things that displease Him, He will chastise us (Hebrew 12:6):

*For whom the Lord loveth he **chasteneth**, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

He does not want our sins to take us away from His fellowship and blessings. So we ought to obey Him.

The eating of food offered to idols was expressly forbidden by God. We can appreciate Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthian Christians not to eat the things that had been sacrificed to idols, in fact, they had been offered to demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-22).² The eating of food that had been sacrificed to idols and evil spirits was a common religious practice among the pagans. Christians should refrain from food that had been spiritually defiled (offered to the devils). As the Bride of Christ, the Church ought to keep herself chaste and loyal to Christ, the Bridegroom, for our God is a jealous God.

In the slaughtering of an animal and making a peace offering, the Israelite must do it only at the entrance of the tabernacle. He could not kill the animal at the door of his own tent. This teaches us the principle that the church is a designated and approved place of corporate worship and service to the LORD. The oft cited phrase that “God is anywhere and we can worship Him anywhere” is unscriptural. The early disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ met regularly on the first day of the week to break bread and worship God. It is the will of God that His people meet at a chosen place to bring their offerings of

² KJV 1 Corinthians 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils. 22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

praise and service to Him. This affirms the truth that there is only one way to God, not many ways, and not just any way. It must always be God’s way.

The eating of coagulated blood is forbidden by God. So when a Chinese becomes a Christian he must stop eating such food. The reason is valid as it was given in the time of Moses—the life in the flesh is the blood thereof. We do not eat blood because God says so.

Knowing God and how to worship Him is not complete if we do not obey and do what He has commanded us to do. Do the things that delight Him. As James had stated: Faith without works is dead. Let us not be just professing Christians but also practising Christians.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Leviticus 17:1-9; 1 Corinthians 10:16-33.

Tuesday: Leviticus 17:10-14; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 1:5; 5:9.

Wednesday: Leviticus 17:15-16; Deuteronomy 17:21.

Thursday: Acts 15:1-31.

Friday: John 6:51-69.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Were the animals in vv.3-7 clean or unclean?

- 2. What was the purpose of slaughtering the animals — for sacrificial offerings or personal consumption?

3. What was the commandment with regards to the slaughtering of animals?

4. What do you think was the purpose of imposing the restriction on the children of Israel?

5. Why was it a peace offering?

6. What was the penalty for breaking the law?

7. What was the reason for the commandment against eating blood?

8. Is this the first time the law was made? If not, when was it first made?

9. Is the law applicable to New Testament Christians?

10. What does Leviticus 17 have to say about do-it-yourself worshipping of God?

11. Are New Testament Christians permitted to drink blood or eat coagulated blood?

12. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ call us to drink His blood?
