



PENN FREE
METHODIST
CHURCH
BIBLE STUDY

22nd February
2017

Leviticus
17:1-16

KEY TO THE LAYOUT OF THIS STUDY

**The verses being
studied are in
bold type**

*Supporting and
illustrative Scripture
texts are in italics*

**THE PRECIOUS,
UNIQUE
AND LIFE-SAVING
NATURE
OF THE BLOOD
OF CHRIST**

The explanation and
commentary on the
verses being
studied and of the
supporting texts are in
normal typeface

v1. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, v2. Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, saying”. This is the direct word of the Lord to both priest and people. It is a general principle of universal significance.

v3. “What man soever *there be* of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth *it* out of the camp”. The word ‘kill’ here means kill for purposes of religious sacrifice. The Israelites are now in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. Whether they are encamped, or in the open countryside, they must never engage in the sacrificial slaughter of beasts other than at the place which God had designated that it should be done.

v4. “And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people”. Sacrifices must be brought to the priests at the door of the

tabernacle. This was where the one true God had chosen to manifest His presence. This injunction was necessary to prevent their offering sacrifices to idols and false gods. In former times the men of God were accustomed to offer up sacrifices wherever they might be, including in their homes. We read of Job, for example,

“(He) rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of (his children)” (Job 1:5). We are told in Genesis 31,

“Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount” (Genesis 31:53–54). So here are instances of sacrifices in the home and outside of the home. Now, however, sacrifices must only be offered up at the tabernacle. The Lord was preparing the Israelites for a fixed and centralised place of worship. This would be also be a means of protecting them from offering sacrifices to idols, an offence which was punishable by death. The man who ignores this law laid down in v4 is said to have “shed blood”, albeit only the blood of a beast, but such blood as has been set apart by God for holy usage. The blood of the sacrificial beast represents the ransom price for the life of a sinner. Therefore to abuse that blood is to abuse that which represents the saving of life. So we read here, “Blood shall be imputed to that man”. Those who offered animal blood to a false god were guilty of shedding blood for wicked purposes, blood which the Lord had designated as sacred, to be offered up to Him as a means of preserving the life of the sinner. To shed blood for wicked purposes is to be as a murderer. We are thus told in Isaiah 66:3 concerning the offering up of sacrifices to idols,

“He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man” (Isaiah 66:3).

The punishment for making idolatrous sacrifices under the Old Testament law was death. So in terms of the guilt incurred, it was the same penalty as that of the murderer. We accordingly read in Exodus 22:20,

“He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed” (Exodus 22:20).

So the one shedding blood before a false god “shall be cut off from among his people”, as this verse 4 tells us. This means excommunicated, put under God’s curse, banished from the community of God’s people. Depending on the context, it may also at times mean being subjected to the death penalty.

v5. “To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the Lord”. The Israelites would be tempted to offer sacrifices “in the open field”, in uninhabited desert places, because they had had been influenced by the Egyptians who did likewise, as they offered sacrifices to their god known as Pan, who manifested himself as a goat, and who was was the god of wild, desert and mountainous regions. It is from this god that our English word ‘panic’ is derived. Sadly the Israelites had imbibed Egypt’s idolatrous practices. As Joshua would one day have to tell the people,

“Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt” (Joshua 24:14).

So, says the Lord here, sacrifices must be made only to the one true God of Israel, and only at the place which He has commanded. Therefore if an Israelite desires to make a special offering to the Lord to express His devotion and thanksgiving - which type of offering would take the form of a peace offering - it must only be at God’s appointed altar. The holy God determines the basis on which He will be approached. It is not a broad basis with many varying options left to man’s personal tastes, but a narrow, precise and restricted basis. The Old Testament tabernacle foreshadows Christ Himself. He is the true place of sacrifice; indeed, He is the sacrifice itself. Today, God can be approached and sins forgiven only through Him

v6. “And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the Lord”. The altar is the place of offering up sacrifices which God has ordained. The priest is to sprinkle the blood of the Israelites’ sacrifices upon the altar in the court of the tabernacle. This presenting of blood before God is absolutely essential, because it is the only basis upon which He can have dealings with sinful men. It is only through the shedding of blood that His justice upon sin is satisfied and that the approach of the worshipper is accepted.

v7. “And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations”. This prohibition upon sacrificial slaughter anywhere than at the door of the tabernacle would also curtail the temptation, when sacrificing in the open countryside, to sacrifice to the gods, who, it was believed by other nations, inhabited these deserted rural areas. Never must the Israelites sacrifice to the false gods of the surrounding nations. This statute about offering at the door of the tabernacle, and later the Temple, must stand for ever, until such time as the sacrificial system itself is brought to an end by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

v8. “And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice”. v9. And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord; even that man shall be cut off from among his people”. We note that foreigners living within Israel’s borders, like the Israelites themselves, were not allowed to sacrifice to other gods, but only to the one true God, and at His appointed place. If they or any Israelite did offer sacrifice to other gods, any right to reside amongst God’s people was forfeited. His land must not be polluted. As we have already seen, this idolatry carried the death penalty with it.

v10. “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people”. Here is an injunction against the eating of flesh without the blood first being drained out of it. Eating flesh with blood still in it could of course be done in private without it being detected, and so the Lord Himself declares here that He will set his face against the offender, implying that He sees also the actions of men done in secret.

v11. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul”. It is a medical fact that blood sustains life. Blood has vital functions as it circulates around the body. For example, if the flow of blood ceases to a particular limb, sensation is lost and that limb can no longer be used. “The blood carries water to every cell and maintains the body’s temperature” (Henry Morris Study Bible). Blood then is the very vehicle of physical life, but not only this, God has also appointed it for sacred use, to be the means of taking away the sinner’s guilt and causing him to escape from the eternal death which would otherwise be his, when he dies. Owing to this unique significance of blood the Lord decrees here that “no blood must be either eaten or trodden under foot as a common thing” (Matthew Henry), because it is blood sprinkled on the altar which makes an atonement for the soul. It covers the soul’s guilt, it satisfies the soul’s debt, so that life is not forfeited. This is what God has decreed, so much so that there is no other way of obtaining cleansing from sin.

v12. “Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood”. Because of the sacred nature of blood and God’s appointment of it as the means of cleansing from sin, the Lord decrees that the blood of sacrificial beasts shall not be consumed as mere food.

v13. “And whatsoever man *there be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust”. This first day of the shedding of the blood of beasts by means of hunting in the open countryside, beasts which were captured precisely for food rather than for sacrifices. Even in this situation the blood must be regarded as sacred because it contains within it the properties of life. It must be poured out from the beast on to the earth and covered up. One commentator explains this law in the following way: “The purpose of the command was to prevent the desecration of the vehicle of the (animal’s) life, which was sanctified as the medium of expiation” (Keil and Delitzsch). So the blood is God’s appointed means of expiation, that is, the removal of the guilt and condemnation which sin deserves. Let no Israelite ever undervalue the holy nature of blood, which is the very means of spiritual life and reconciliation to God.

v14. “For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off”. Even common human experience tells us that there is something very significant about blood. The mere sight of it can have an effect upon people like no other substance can. Not even the blood of common edible fowl must be treated as ordinary, because it is the means of God-given life, and is of such an elevated status as to be representative of human life in the sight of God. Therefore it must not be eaten, and when poured out upon the earth, it must not be left exposed, but must be carefully covered up. Blood, then, represents life itself. Without blood both animals and humans cease to function and die. Blood makes both men

and beasts living, breathing creatures in a way that plants are not. The Lord, of course, knew all about the scientific and life-sustaining properties of blood long before man discovered them. The circulation of blood around the body, for example, was not known about until as late as 1616 A.D. So this verse 14, as well as being a statement of the sacred nature of blood, is also a scientific statement centuries ahead of its time.

v15. “And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean”. We have here a prohibition upon eating animals which have died naturally or which have been mauled by other beasts. Let us again note that both the Israelites and the foreigners within their midst must observe what is said. Animals which have died in such a manner would not have the blood properly or sufficiently drained from them. Therefore they cannot be eaten. Whoever faultlessly or ignorantly each such flesh with the blood still in it must go through a ceremonial cleansing of washing his clothes and his body, because he has contracted uncleanness in God’s sight. So let not any Israelite imagine that he can regard this command about the consumption of blood as an minor matter of little import.

v16. “But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity”. If the Israelite does not go through the cleansing ceremony, then he is guilty of profaning the blood, which by its very nature is the source of life and which God has decreed to be set apart only for holy usage.

Conclusion

What special regard God has for the blood of sacrificed beasts. When He sees it, He is pleased to grant life to undeserving sinners, because in the shedding of blood He sees His justice being satisfied. When in the time of Moses God’s destroying angel came against Egypt and struck down all her firstborn sons, God passed over and spared Israel's firstborn. He preserved their lives because He saw the blood of a sacrificed lamb smeared upon the door posts of the Israelites’ homes.

“The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13). We thus learn that the application of blood is the difference between life and death, and this has enormous significance for every non-Christian today. We simply cannot understand the Christian Gospel without realising the unique significance of Christ's shed blood.

The blood of the Old Testament sacrifices all foreshadowed Christ's blood. These former sacrifices were only effective on the basis of what Christ would one day accomplish, when He shed His blood on the Cross. He is the true, perfect and only sacrifice for sin. He shed His blood paying the penalty for the sins of the world. God the Father sees His blood applied to the believer in His Son, and He declares, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you”. So the application of Christ's blood to the sinner today is the only way that sins can be forgiven. The application of Christ's blood is nothing less than the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

The Old Testament tabernacle foreshadowed the Person of Christ - the presence of God amongst His people. The Lord Jesus Christ is in fact the *true* tabernacle; He is the fulfilment of what the tabernacle foreshadowed. He is the *only* place where sin can be atoned for. Only coming to Him can salvation be obtained. How vital it is, therefore, that all today rightly esteem the preciousness of the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood is the only means by which men’s sins can be forgiven.

“Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Not to regard Christ’s shed blood as holy and precious is both foolish and tragic; it is to reject the sinner’s only means of salvation.

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing” (Hebrews 10:29). Let us, therefore, rightly esteem the blood of Christ, which God has given to us upon the altar to make atonement for our souls. Christ’s blood is the only means of saving the sinner from an eternal death and condemnation.