

I met a priest when I was around 11 years old. He gave me a great impression. He was kind, friendly and caring. He is not a Chinese but speaks Chinese. He was like a principle in my evening school. He greeted the students like me when he saw me. My impression of him is a very holy person. The book of Leviticus contains a lot of descriptions about worship, priesthood, and holiness. The Levites were the tribe of Israelites descended from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The priests of Israel, set by the rules of God, were a group of qualified men from within the tribe of the Levites who had responsibility over aspects of tabernacle and temple worship. When we study the book of Leviticus and the New Testament passages on priesthood and holiness, we can see there are applications for our daily Christian lives.

1. God's grace and for the good of His people

The book of Leviticus can be divided into two main sections. The first section is from chapter 1 to the end of chapter 10. The first 7 chapters are about offering and worship, and chapters 8 to 10 are about priesthood. Chapter 11 to 27 are about holiness. The sacrificial system of the OT was a means of grace by which relationship between God and humanity be restored. There are 5 offerings given: burnt offering, grain offering, peace/fellowship offering, sin offering and trespass offering. Burnt offering (Lev. 1:9), grain offering (Lev. 2:9) and fellowship offering (Lev. 3:5) are food offerings that have aroma pleasing to the Lord. They are intended for devotion to God and fellowship with God. They are also intended for the good of God's people. Sin offering (chapters 4 &5) is about judgement and a way to purify oneself for re-entering the presence of God. Guilt or called trespass offering (chapters 5-7) is about forgiveness or reparation. All these offerings are God's intention for people to restore the relationship between the Israelites and God, and also between God's people (Guilt offering). While the Israelites were observing these offerings, these acts helped them to be more conscious of their actions and to walk more closely with God.

Chapters 8 to 10 described the ordination of Aaron and sons, and the start of priesthood. This transitions to the subject holy living.

2. Holiness

Four times in this book God says something like, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Chapter 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, 20:26). The high-level theme of these later chapters is holiness, and it is also God's demand for us. These chapters in Leviticus contain specific details on the how to be clean like types of food and human body cleaning, and various laws for human actions. All these are rules intended for the Israelites to keep physical clean and spiritually holy. Those rules are highly appropriate for the people at that time.

As we are in the New Testament period, we know the OT sacrificial system was inadequate. Nobody can repay the debt of sin in life until Christ defeated death once and for all. Heb. 10:10 states "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Christ came and fulfilled the law. Jesus was explaining, expanding and exemplifying God's law to us.

In regarding to food, Mark 7:19 shows Jesus is not restricting any type of food to be deemed as unclean. Also see I Tim. 4:1-5, Acts 10:11-15 and I Cor. 10:23.

In regarding to holiness and offering, He requires us to offer our own lives as a living and holy sacrifice (Rom 12:1) that is pleasing to God, like aroma as described in food offerings. Bible verse I Peter 2:5 states "you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Each Christian should be a priest (I Peter 2:5; 2:9 & Rev. 20:6); priest needs to be holy and pure. I Peter 1:16 quotes the same Leviticus verses "Be holy because I am holy." Christ in NT has demonstrated a life of a holy person, and that is what we need to follow. A priest, following the manner of the High Priest Jesus, can show his characters in love, joy, peace, kindness, truthfulness etc. (Gal. 5:22-23, James 3:17 & Phil. 4:8-9)

The priest I met in my evening school when I was young demonstrated a lot of those holy characters. I want other people think of me as the way I highly respect that priest. Each one of us is called to be a priest in God's kingdom. What kind of impression are you giving to others? Are you demonstrating the holiness that others can see God through you?

Appendix (information from web)

Sacrificial System (The 5 Sacrifices in Leviticus)

NAME	REFERENCE	ELEMENTS	SIGNIFICANCE
Burnt Offering	Lev 1; 6:8–13	Bull, ram, male goat, male dove, or young pigeon without blemish. (Always male animals, but species of animal varied according to individual's economic status.)	Voluntary. Signifies propitiation for sin and complete surrender, devotion, and commitment to God.
Grain Offering Also called Meal or Tribute Offering	Lev 2; 6:14–23	Flour, bread, or grain made with olive oil and salt (always unleavened); or incense.	Voluntary. Signifies thanksgiving for firstfruits.
Sin Offering	Lev 4:1–5:13; 6:24–30; 12:6–8	Male or female animal without blemish—as follows: bull for high priest and congregation; male goat for king; female goat or lamb for common person; dove or pigeon for slightly poor; tenth of an ephah of flour for the very poor.	Mandatory. Made by one who had sinned unintentionally or was unclean in order to attain purification.
Guilt Offering	Lev 5:14–6:7; 7:1–6; 14:12–18	Ram or lamb without blemish	Mandatory. Made by a person who had either deprived another of his rights or had desecrated something holy. ¹
Peace Offering Also called Fellowship Offering : includes: (1) Thank Offering , (2) Vow Offering , & (3) Freewill Offering	Lev 3; 7:11–36	Any animal without blemish. (Species of animal varied according to individual's economic status.)	Voluntary. Symbolizes fellowship with God. (1) Signifies thankfulness for a specific blessing; (2) offers a ritual expression of a vow; and (3) symbolizes general thankfulness (to be brought to one of three required religious services).
