

Leviticus

Chapters 17

Blood And Food

18.09.2005

I had to ring an energy company to organise a connection for someone. After a small wait, I was told me that no connection was possible unless the person who wanted the connection rang and organised it. I was not acceptable. I thought it was a bit of stupid red tape until I thought more and realised that if that rule wasn't there, then anyone could connect or disconnect people and cause trouble. I hadn't approached them in the way that they wanted.

Right at the start of Leviticus 16, there were a few verses about a wrong approach to God, which dramatically ended with a very obvious lack of connection. *The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the 2 sons of Aaron, who died when they approached the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.'*

The book of Leviticus sets out the correct way to approach God. He is a holy, sinless God, who cannot stand to have unholy sinning people near him. Yet He is also a loving God who wants to be with his people. So He gave His Old Testament people a way for him to be with them. It involved the things on this next picture: (ark, temple, priest, law, sacrifice)

The golden ark of the covenant was to be known as his footstool on earth. You could find God anywhere, but He promised that He would definitely be found wherever that ark was. No-one could simply bowl up to God's ark and say g'day, we made it!

The ark was kept in a special tent or tabernacle (and later on in the Temple). It was kept in an inner room, called the Holy of Holies, then there were layers of rooms around it. People with major disabilities were not to enter the structure at all. Non Jewish people were only allowed in the outer bit. Jewish women were allowed a bit closer. Jewish men could go a bit further. Jewish priests went near to the Holy of Holies, but only

one, the HP, could enter the Holy of Holies, and only on one day a year.

In Leviticus 16, the events of that day are described, after Aaron lost 2 sons who had entered against God's wishes. The priests were vital, because they could go close and offer the sacrifices the way God wanted.

God gave his people the 10 commandments and the Law which fleshed them out, to follow so that they would remain holy if they followed it exactly. But he knew they would constantly fail, so he gave them the system of sacrifices and offerings as the way to be forgiven and restored.

The book of Leviticus sets out in enormous details the types of sacrifices and offerings they had to bring, because by shedding the animal's blood in the way God described, showed that they trusted him, and trusted that he would forgive them through the death of that animal.

But in Leviticus 17, we find out what would happen if people thumbed their nose at God and said "That's too difficult mate! We want to do it our own way!" What happens if people short-circuit the system and think they can do it themselves anywhere they want?

Leviticus 17 :2-4 says *Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: 'This is what the Lord has commanded. Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat, in the camp or outside of it, instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord – that man shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood and must be cut off from his people'.*

There was only 1 acceptable place for sacrifices. If you chose to ignore God's command, then you would be cut off from being part of God's people. It was worse than simply quitting Telstra for Optus, and thus missing Telstra deals. The person who disobeyed was disconnecting himself or herself from the Living God. Even though they thought they were worshipping

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God, not only was no connection established, but there was a massive penalty of disconnection from the community. They were to be banished from the community.

And they should certainly not offer any sacrifice to any idol or other god.

So for the Israelite, their sacrifices had to be centrally located and offered by bona fide priests in the correct way.

It seems very narrow, does it not? Yet that is what God organized, because He is Holy, and wants us to approach him in the only way we can, which is as his holy, forgiven people. Buck the system and you get no connection to the true and living God.

But surely things changed in the New Testament!

In the New Testament, this need for connecting to God the correct way, and not through anyone or anything else is described in many ways.

Perhaps the most famous is in John 14:6 where Jesus says *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

It appears exclusive. It appears very narrow. But Jesus said *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

So do we have to go through the narrow gate and find the ark, the temple, the priests, the Law and the sacrifices?

What change did Jesus make for us? Or should we be modern day Jews, seeking to restore Jerusalem and the Temple sacrifices again, so we can be right with God?

What about the ark? It was the special box which was God's footstool on earth. We know from Christmas, that Jesus was Emmanuel, which means God with us. But he no longer can be seen in the flesh, as He now reigns with his Father in heaven. But what he has done, after

dying and rising again, is to send the Holy Spirit to be with us. So God is with us through His Spirit, because of what Jesus did.

What about the temple? Like the ark, it was the special place where the faithful made their sacrifices and drew near to God. Like the ark, Jesus has replaced the Temple, and he has said that we are now God's temple, both individually and as his gathered people. His Spirit is with us. So we are to take care of ourselves and each other, for God is with us. The layers are gone, we can approach God equally directly, whether male female, Jew or not, disabled or not, young or old.

But what about the priesthood? Jesus is our great high priest who offered the true sacrifice and offering for us. He replaced the need for the Jewish priesthood, and he is our great high priest. He has perfect access not simply into an earthly copy, but directly into heaven to the Father's throne, where he represents us.

What about the Law? Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law, never once breaking it. He lived the perfect life. The New Testament says that anyone united with him, by faith, shares in the benefits of his perfect obedience, so he kept it for us.

And what about the sacrifices? He died as the perfect offering for our sins. His offering was a once-only sacrifice effective for all who believe he did it for us.

And now he says *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

And Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

So today as we have been reminded through the baptism of having a child-like trust in Jesus, just as this child trusts her parents implicitly, and as we are about to remember that great sacrifice

Jesus did for us in dying on the cross for you and me, I must ask each one of us here:

Have you entered the narrow way? Do you trust in Jesus alone to save you? Could you answer the questions of the baptism service faithfully without any qualms?

I pray you do. I know He is trustworthy, because I trust Him and know Him as my saviour who wants me to live for him now.

(NB. As get to underlined heading, replace picture of the item with the word JESUS)