

December 3 2023
The Church and Blood Leviticus 17

Leviticus 17:1-4

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the Lord has commanded. **3** If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, **4** and does **not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting** to offer it as a gift to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man **shall be cut off from among his people**.

Wow! This is very serious. Can you imagine being “**cut off**” from your family?

What would your life be without church? No more Bible study groups. No more playing volleyball with church people. No more church at the park. **What would your life be without fellowship?**

Now I know that many of you grew up in church and when you don't go to church, it just feels awkward, right. **Like you're walking out of a house without your clothes on.** In other words, you are missing something important.

There was a time, in my mid twenties, when **I didn't go to church for about a whole year.** I went to Korea, thinking that God will not be in Korea. Wow! I was totally off. God was everywhere, including Korea.

The reason why I bring this up is when you **find your home church**, your whole identity is filled up with that church, church activities and church family, and that is called fellowship: **Jesus, you and friends.**

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we **have fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

“We walk in the light”: What this verse is stating is that when believers walk in the light together: there is fellowship and friendship because **we are all in spiritual unity through Jesus Christ**. So the friendship develops into a community.

Another reason why it's important to be part of a church is because **you will experience forgiveness**. Because God forgave us for our sins, we learned to forgive others. So in a church community, we find forgiveness, love and healing.

But what would happen, if your whole identity with church was destroyed? No more fellowship and no more place of worship. What do you do when your church is gone?

Just like the Israelites when the Romans soldiers destroyed the temple in 70 A.D., **the people had literally lost their identity** of who they are. No more sacrifices and offerings. No more blood on the mercy seat for God's forgiveness for our sins. And, no more **“Yom Kippur,”** the day in which all your sins for the whole year were to be gone. What do you do with your sin, since the temple is destroyed?

So after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, the **Jewish people scattered all across the Roman Empire**. And because there was **no central place of worship**, there was no more animal sacrifice, and no place to study the Torah, they started to assemble together to a place called **“Synagogue.”**

[Show image of a typical Synagogue]

The term ***synagogue*** is of Greek origin (*synagein*, “to bring together”) and means “a place of assembly.”

[Show image of a tall church steeple]

Side Note: Long time ago in America when you visited or drove by a small town, what you would notice is that there would be a church with a tall steeple. **Why is there a tall steeple?** Well the original purpose was when they create a town or designed a town, they would design it with the church **being the main focus** and have all the homes and business surrounding it.

And **the reason for the steeple being the tallest**, was so that everyone else would look up at the church and say, “***That is where God dwells.***” Because the church was the central place of worship.

The idea of the church and the tall steeple came from the Bible. You would have the tabernacle in the central location and all the tribes would have their camps surrounding it. So when they would look up, they would see that **the tabernacle as the tallest tent** and the people would know where it was. That’s why a lot of old traditional American churches would have a tall steeple, so they can see God.

That’s why in Leviticus 17:3-5

Leviticus 17:3-5

3 If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, 4 and does **not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting** to offer it as a gift to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man **shall be cut off from among his people.** 5 This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord, to the priest

at the **entrance of the tent of meeting**, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the Lord.

“Entrance to the tent of meeting”: The tent of meeting is the tabernacle and the entrance means that it is the front door. So it is the **front door to the church**.

“Bring your offering or bring your worship to the entrance of the tent of meeting” basically means, give your worship at the tabernacle. Worship at the church. Don’t do any sacrifice or worship outside the camp because you will be cut off from your people.

I had a conversation with someone who said, *“I don’t need to go to church to believe in God. I believe in God. I can just pray on my own. I can read the Bible on my own.”* In other words, he is saying, *“I don’t need other Christians. I don’t need fellowship and I don’t need to go to a central place to worship God.”* This man was missing out.

In the New Testament, we see clearly that the body of the church is needed. **They gather together and fellowship** They pray together. They read scripture together, and they keep each other accountable.

On Saturday’s Bible study, everyone pitched in and brought food to share. We had an awesome **“Taco Meal.”** Many of the ladies went for second and third plate. We read the Bible together and we prayed together.

That’s why a Christian family is so important to our spiritual walk. We humans, you and I were created to **have relationships with other human beings**. We are social in nature. Even monkeys have social groups. Dolphins have social gatherings. Even **crocodiles** and **mice** have their own social groups.

One time, in our women's Bible study group, they found a mouse running through the living room and all the human creatures jumped on the chair and started screaming. "Mouse, Mouse!" My son and I almost caught the mouse, but it got away. **The Bible study group lived in fear**, till the mouse was found. Women and men are definitely different :) But we ended with a great Bible study. Later we found the mice and killed it.

1 Corinthians 12:24-25

24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, **25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the **members may have the same care for one another**.

God is calling church family to care for one another. This is why it's important to be part of a home church, so we can kill the mouse in the house :)

Now as you continue to read, it talks about a "**goat demon**."

Leviticus 17:6-7

6 And the priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the Lord. **7** So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to **goat demons**, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

What in the world is a "goat demon?"

You have to remember that the Israelites lived in Egypt for over 400 years and in the book of Leviticus they are **fresh in memory of all the different gods they worshipped**. You had hundreds of Egyptian gods that the people worshipped. You had gods like:

- Amun: god of the sun and air
- Ra: The sun god

[Show images of Sobek and Heqet gods]

- Sobek: the crocodile god
- Heqet: The frog goddess of fertility

So one of the popular Egyptian gods that they worshipped was a goat god.

Goat Demons: The word (Hebrew: śā'îr, pronounced “saw-eer” Also translated as “devils,” literally denotes a *hairy* or *shaggy goats*. A goat is like god or demons.

[Show image of “Pan” god]

There is a man-goat (half man and half goat) image called “Pan” who is worshipped in Egypt, and also worshipped all through the period of Greek, Roman times, and to this very day. People today still worship this “pan” god. A lot of the **new age** people worship the “pan” god.

So what they offered to this pan god was ordinary food, so they could have a good harvest and plenty to eat. They were giving these sacrifices to this “shaggy goat” or “**Goat Demons**.” And they built statues of this “Pan” god all throughout Egypt, and **the Israelites picked it upped the same “goat demons” and brought the same types of sacrifice into the camp.**

And God the “Yahweh” the invisible God, was not having any of it. “***I don’t want you to be like the other nations. That is why I am asking you to be Holy. To be set apart. Don’t bring your worship of other gods into the tabernacle.***”

Leviticus 17:7 So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to **goat demons**, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

That's why the First of the Ten Commandment says: You shall have no other gods before me.

Exodus 20:3

“You shall have no other gods before me.

It is interesting how the Hebrews still had brought in their old ways of life and the Lord was commanding them to be Holy and set apart.

- Don't think like the old ways!
- Don't talk like the old ways!
- Don't behave like the old ways!

You are a new creation in Christ, start thinking like the new. Start talking like the new and start behaving as Holy people of God. You are a new creation in Christ. No longer living like the old.

- Don't sacrifice any offerings outside of the tabernacle.
- Don't worship the “goat demons” like the other nations.
- You are the child of Yahweh, the creator of the universe.

Then in Leviticus 17, something very interesting happens. The first part of chapter 17 says, “***I want you to go to a central place of worship***” and “don't worship the goat demons, but part 2 of chapter 17 says, “***don't eat blood!***”

Why in the world, did God put that in there? Let's read.

Leviticus 17:10-11

10 “If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, **I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off** from among

his people. **11** For the **life of the flesh is in the blood**, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for **it is the blood that makes atonement by the life**.

Leviticus 17:13-14

13 “Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. **14** For the **life of every creature is its blood**: its **blood is its life**. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall **not eat the blood of any creature**, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever **eats it shall be cut off**.

“**Shall be cut off**” Wow! These are very strong words.

Eating the blood was a serious crime. In 1 Samuel when the battle was raging against the Philistines and the Israelites were told not to eat anything till the enemy was to be defeated. A vow was made not to touch any food, but because the soldiers were faint due to lack of food, they disobeyed:

1 Samuel 14:31-35

31 They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very faint. **32** The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood. **33** Then they told Saul, “**Behold, the people are sinning against the Lord by eating with the blood**.” And he said, “You have dealt treacherously; roll a great stone to me here.” **34** And Saul said, “Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, ‘Let every man bring his ox

or his sheep and slaughter them here and eat, and **do not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.**” So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night and they slaughtered them there. **35** And Saul built an altar to the Lord; it was the first altar that he built to the Lord

Let’s tackle this issue: Has anyone ever gave a blood donation before? **Why do people give blood donations?**

Hospitals use what is called “**Blood transfusions**” are one of the most common procedures in U.S. hospitals. So if someone has a surgery or gets injured and loses a lot of blood, then you can get a “blood transfusion” so you can survive and live. **But without any blood donation and you lose a lot of blood, you can die.**

That’s why it says in verse 14, that “***the life of every creature is its blood; its blood is its life.***” But I want to focus on verse 11.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and **I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls**, for it is the **blood that makes atonement by the life.**

So the blood is used to cover over our sin (atonement), so we can have life. **Why do you need blood for the covering over your sins?**

Why on Yom Kippur, does the High priest need to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat? Why does the High Priest on Yom Kippur kill one goat for the sin offering (For the sins of the nation) and the other goat with all its confessions on the nation (scapegoat: innocent goat taking the sins of the nation), for that goat to be set free (the scapegoat)? **Why not just take the scapegoat for the one that is free to be atonement? Why must there be blood for sin offering?**

Remember **Leviticus 17:14** says “For the **life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life.**”

Remember when **Adam and Eve sinned against God?** God created everything including humans and said that it was “**good.**” And then in **Genesis 2:17** God tells Adam and Eve not to eat from the “**tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.**” So this is a strong command, you will die, if you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord makes it clear, if you disobey and sin against God, you will die. This means that a **blood will be shed, and it will be Adam and Eve’s blood.**

And like all humans Adam and Eve decided to sin and eat from the fruit of the “**knowledge of good and evil.**” So they deserve death and **blood should be set, right?** That was a command from God, that if you eat of this tree, you will die. Now we know that God didn’t kill Adam and Eve. But here is a question:

Why not just replace Adam and Eve? God is the creator and judge, so why create another human beings to replace Adam and Eve?

This is the beautiful picture of God’s love

Remember, God could have simply destroyed Adam and Eve and say, “**Forget you guys. You have disobeyed me, so I am going to create Jack and Jill as new humans who will replace you and who will never disobey me.**” Right! God could have simply done that. And Jack and Jill would have been the perfect human beings. **They would never disobey God and be the perfect robot.**

But then a question rose in my mind: **Does a robot need love?** If the robot is perfect, then it doesn’t need mercy. **God does not have to show His mercy and He doesn’t need to give love.**

So why does God create something that it knows will sin? Why does God create humans knowing that they will disobey?

Here is the first shedding of blood. God decided to cover their sin by shedding the first blood by killing an animal.

Genesis 3:21 New Living Translation

And the Lord God made clothing from **animal skins** for Adam and his wife.

Here God sheds the blood of an animal so that Adam and Eve can be covered over for their sins (atonement) so that they may have life.

God gave us a picture from the very beginning that a blood must be shed so that another can have life. One life will end so that another life can live. One life's blood for another life.

John 15:13 New Living Translation

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Jesus calls you friends and he shed his blood for us so that you and I can be covered. So that His life died so that you and I can have life. A life for a life, so that His blood can bring us life.

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Listen you and I are not robots. We sin and we need the mercy of God. **Robots will not have "freedom" through Jesus' blood**, the forgiveness of our disobedience.

We have “missed the mark,” but yet because of His blood for life for another life we receive His love, His mercy and His grace. God could have simply made “Jack and Jill” but yet He didn’t and decided to cover us with the blood of Jesus.

So many times, that I screwed up in life, I’m surprised that God didn’t just wipe me out and create a new robot Joseph Choi, but He did. He transformed me from the inside out. God doesn’t change people from outside in, He changes people from the inside out. Jesus’ blood for our life.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.