

Leviticus Chapter 17

Laws About Sacrificing and Blood – For the Layman



There is no access to God without blood.

That's just the way it is. If you are trying to get to God without a blood sacrifice, you are wasting your time. If you are satisfying a god without a blood sacrifice, then it is not the God of the Bible that you are satisfying. From the beginning to the end, from the day man was kicked out of the Garden of Eden through all ages, including this one, and on into the Millennial kingdom, no one comes to God without a blood sacrifice. *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness* (Hebrews 9:22). If you think you are going to come to God through good works, doing penance, confessions, baptisms, sacraments, ceremonies/celebrations/services of prayers, confession of sins, scripture reading, singing and praising – forget it! There is no way to approach God without a blood sacrifice. Period!

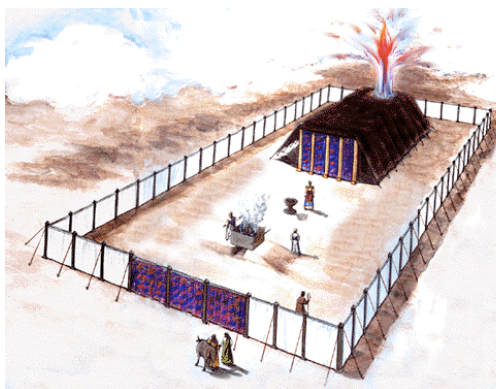
[Blood picture from www.leelofland.com.]

Leviticus 17:1-7 All Animals that Are Killed, Must be Killed at the Door of the Tabernacle

This section begins with the (now) familiar declaration that this instruction is from God to Moses. This time, it was to be delivered (by Moses) not just to Aaron and his sons but also to *all the sons of Israel*.

Specifically, any ox, lamb, or goat which a family wishes to slaughter for food, must be killed in close proximity to the door of the Tabernacle. The purpose for this was to end the practice of sacrificing these animals to goat demons (or possible goat-like-demons, but, anyway, demons).

[The picture is a carving on a bolder of an Assyrian goat demon from www.sacred-texts.com.]



The command of killing these domestic animals by the Tabernacle was so that the blood and the fat would be sacrificed to God, then the rest of the meat could be eaten by the family. This was probably not a severe hardship, since meat was not part of their regular diet, except at the time of festivals. In the wilderness, the Israelites ate manna, plus they probably ate honey, some other vegetables, and domesticated female animals that produced dairy products. This command was only for their wilderness time. When

they entered the land, the logistics made this unreasonable, so local slaughter of animals was allowed (Deuteronomy 12:20-28).

[Tabernacle picture from knowyourmessiah.com.]

Leviticus 17:8-9 All Sacrifices Must Be Made at the Tabernacle

The focus of the previous section was on domestic animals slaughtered for food. The focus of this section is on animals which were to be sacrificed. The point is clear—no sacrifice was ever to be done by anybody (Israelite or alien or visitor) anywhere except at the central Tabernacle.

Leviticus 17:10-14 No One Should Ever Eat Any Blood

There are seven prohibitions in the Pentateuch against eating blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-14; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:15-16, 23-24; and 15:23). This one (Leviticus 17:10-13) is the clearest. Verse 11 gives two reasons for the prohibition against eating blood:

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

Leviticus 17:15-16 Eating an Animal that Dies Naturally

This raises the question: “What about animals killed in a hunt or killed by other animals? Can those be eaten without bringing them to the Tabernacle?” The answer is, yes, they can, as long as they are not unclean animals and the blood is drained out of them first. But if anyone eats such animals, *whether he is a native or an alien, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean* (17:15). Actually, even touching such a carcass made one unclean (Leviticus 11:39-40). This was modified to include only aliens or foreigners when they were in the land (Deuteronomy 14:21).

THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- Since God has never allowed access to Himself without a blood sacrifice, we had better make sure we are clinging to the blood of Christ on the cross.
- Apparently, sacrificing to goat demons was a common form of idolatry that went as far as, or came from, Assyria. The question which comes to mind is: “Why on earth would anybody be tempted to sacrifice to a goat demon?” The answer I have observed in countries which actively worship idols (like India) is that people sense that there are spiritual forces or beings which can help them alleviate suffering or obtain prosperity (or good fortune or something). For Israelites, it meant they did not want to depend on God to determine what was in their best interest. That’s because God causes suffering (Job 2:3), and the devil promises pleasure. Ultimately, if you follow God, you will have heavenly pleasure (Revelation 21:1-3) and the devil will lead you to eternal suffering (Revelation 20:11-15). But if you focus on pleasure now, you won’t like God much.
- All through Israel’s history, God forbid local worship places (Deuteronomy 12:11-14). Worship was never casual, and the place was never optional. Synagogues were never part of the Mosaic Law. The fact that it was the custom of Jesus and Paul to go to them does not make them legitimate places of worship. Jesus also taught from a boat and on several different mountains. Paul also taught by the river in Thessalonica and on Mars Hill in Athens. They went to synagogues to do what we call evangelism, not for worship. In Acts,

the apostles met in homes and went to the Temple, not synagogues, for prayer. Jesus called the Temple, not the synagogues, His Father's house.

- The New Testament specifies no place for worship because the church is global, not localized in Israel with a central place of worship. The body of the believer is metaphorically called the *temple of God* today (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19). The only meeting place ever given (by example, not command) for the church was someone's home. I suspect the apostles never suggested a place of worship because they did not want the church to be defined some way other than the people of God.