

Hebrews (Part Two): Who Was Jesus?

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Leviticus 1:1-9 Now the Lord called Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt offering of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the Lord; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay wood in order on the fire. Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar; but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

I chose to begin here because I want us to see that under the Old Covenant, the Israelites were warmly invited by God to come to the tabernacle and participate fully and with understanding to fellowship with Him in His home, as it were. God was now dwelling among His people. Now interestingly, God was not meeting with them from any standpoint that they were alienated from His holiness. The Old Covenant was not as cold and distant a relationship it has been made out to be by those who do not look at these events through spiritual eyes and hear with spiritually attuned ears.

The assignments God gives were the way they were because all who were participating were actually taking part in teaching sessions giving understanding to all Israelites because a new era had begun with the completion of the Tabernacle and the instruction is included for *us* as well. That is important to us. This is the first address by God to the Israelites through Moses from anywhere except the top of Mt. Sinai. That is an interesting fact.

God wanted the Israelites to understand that they were *welcome* to visit with Him, but respectful order would prevail.

Now as you should be able to understand, each person and group, including the ministry, had their part to perform and for specific reasons as well. But if you will note, the Israelites granted the privilege, were to be thoroughly immersed in making his offering and that process. It was after all his sin and his repentance. It was not to be done with an air of detachment. The offerer brought the animal, the offerer laid his hands on the head of the animal. The offerer killed the animal, and the offerer cut the animal in pieces. Do you get that? It was deliberately done by God so this process of having fellowship with God and having sins forgiven, was not to be passed off as being nothing at all.

In addition to that, costliness is involved in the sacrifice. He had to bring the animal. The ministry, the sons of Aaron had their part as well beyond what the offerer was required to do.

Now in the previous sermon, as we began to get ourselves more solidly into the message of the epistle to the Hebrews, we went through a few comparisons between Leviticus and Hebrews, because both books contents are concerned with detailing specific responsibilities within Old and New Covenants. Although much of the Old Covenant is no longer required of us in some specific particulars, it is still exceedingly important to us because it serves as a valid preface to life under the New Covenant.

Leviticus' value to those of us living life having already made the New Covenant with God, through Jesus Christ, lies not in the physical performance of the ceremonies of the sacrifices required under the Old Covenant, but rather in the spiritual principles taught that are indeed still required of us as living sacrifices. Let that sink in.

It is fairly important to read an author's preface to his work in the body of the book. I mentioned to you that Leviticus is the preface for the New Covenant. I wonder how many of us fail to always read what the author's preface is before reading the body of his work. I have a habit of skipping over them, but not near as much as I used to, because I once heard a speech in Spokesmen's Club given by a man whose daytime job was as the principal in an Ohio high school. He convinced me in that speech that one should never fail to read the preface before diving into the body of a book. Now why? Because it is a major key to comprehending the body of the author's work. In the preface the author almost always briefly states what his book is about and why he wrote on that subject. Thus the reader has a heads up on the book in encapsulated form describing what the author hopes to accomplish. The preface is like a road map describing a starting point and giving an overview to the goal.

Leviticus is not an easy book for most of us. I view it in this way: Leviticus is somewhat like a hands-on and very detailed, assemble-it-yourself project that you buy in a store to take home to assemble. This is when you find that precisely following a series of detailed instructions is very important or the pieces will not go together into what you thought it would, or what you thought you bought. So there are pieces strewn all over the living room or all over the garage or workshop and you are trying to figure out does A go into B or does A go into C and C go into B. Sometimes those things are hard to read when you are an impatient guy like I am.

However, this is why I am telling you; we need to be boning up on Leviticus if we really want to understand the New Covenant. Leviticus is indeed an excellent experience to truly prepare one for worshipping God in spirit and truth even though the spiritual road map that is Leviticus is not always clear to us.

Here is a question for you to consider. If you think life under the New Covenant is exceedingly clear and perhaps even easy, then why has the Christian world accepted the Savior but rejected His law? That is totally nonsensical, but that is the way human beings are. We are always looking for shortcuts. That is exactly what historically has been done.

Consider this reality. If Jesus' laws are rejected, there is absolutely no clear road map to guide converts to follow what Jesus has accomplished in living and dying in our behalf. That is one major reason why modern Christianity is so disorganized. It is disunited by doctrinal confusion. Part of that might be because they do not even look into Leviticus. Each one of those steps that God gave for sacrifice is necessary somewhere along the line under the New Covenant.

So instead of following in Christ footsteps, walking as He walked, and thus being united with Christ in conduct first as the overall guide, each organization proceeds to simply pick and choose their doctrinal positions as they see fit, and then add insult to injury by not changing when shown by Scripture that they have discerned wrongly, doctrinally. That is why there exists so much confusion from one church body to all the others. It is mass doctrinal confusion in their positions on doctrine. It seems each *person* pretty much feels free to do what is right in their own eyes. That is awful!

How carefully God detailed everybody's responsibility in the book of Leviticus. That is there for us to learn and if we do not have that kind of a background, we are going to skip over things left and right, we are not even going to perceive them as we are reading them.

So the Old Testament, and perhaps Leviticus especially, remains virtually ignored regarding doctrinal positions. It is a reality that Leviticus is very helpful preliminary to a truly thorough understanding of the New Covenant, and Leviticus is not easy reading. It makes people uncomfortable because they are dealing with something, they are not familiar with, like the sacrifice of animals and such detailed instructions as if those detailed instructions are a crime. No, they are not. That is God giving those detailed instructions and that is exactly what He wanted. He wanted the details to be followed.

So, understand this, the Christian does *not* need Leviticus to be converted. The Christian *does* need Leviticus to more thoroughly understand and live fulfilling the New Covenant and glorifying God.

Now foundations are normally laid first, are they not? This is partly why Leviticus precedes the New Testament in the order that they appear in the book that God wrote and gave us for instruction. It is truly a preliminary foundational instruction for keeping the New Covenant with deep appreciation and understanding. God intends that if at all possible, it is read first, before the New Testament. It prepares us for what is coming there.

The New Covenant is so very important to God's purpose in building His Family, it was delivered and lived by God's only begotten Son. That teaching-and-example setting responsibility was not entrusted to anybody else in all of creation. That is how important it is. What I am saying here is a good precursor for the New covenant is the Old Covenant and I am especially beating the drum of the book of Leviticus because they flow right from one to the other.

Consider Jesus again. Has anybody matched the living standards Jesus set by keeping the New Covenant? The Christian world has a major concept all wrong. They think that the New Covenant is easy. No, it is not. Brethren, I am here to tell you that the New Covenant is more difficult than the Old Covenant! Did anybody in the Old Covenant say we have to keep the law of God in the spirit? We tend to look at it as we only have to meet the letter in terms of the Old Covenant. Let us say that is correct. God would be very pleased if people were keeping the Old Covenant in the spirit as well, but it is commanded for the New Covenant. The law is laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. It is to be kept in the New Covenant, and brethren, that is exceedingly harder, more difficult than just meeting something in the letter.

The New Covenant is not easier than the Old, even though God gives us His Spirit. I think when He gives us His Spirit, He moves a little bit higher in rank as to where we have to go. It is more difficult to live up to the spiritual standards set in the New Covenant and that is what Jesus literally did, and He is our pattern. It is His steps we have to follow in and He lived it up into its spirit.

Now in the previous sermon, we had proceeded to the place where I was beginning to define the qualifications of the One that God had sent to prepare the way for and to establish those God was calling to make the New Covenant with the God Family. Now why? It is because He, that is Jesus, is the major theme of the book of Hebrews, it is almost all about Him.

Matthew 17:1-6 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

Now for this sermon anyway, the key is that instruction from God in which He commanded them, “Hear Him!” Now remember, it was Elijah and Moses that they viewed there with Jesus and God was making an evaluation for them—a ready-made evaluation—despite what you might think of Moses and what you might think of Elijah, and what great prophets they were for you God, I want you to understand that God said, “Hear Jesus.” This is a heads up from God that Jesus was more important than anybody you could ever think of who has lived on this earth, even though those persons might have been people as honored and respected as My prophets Moses and Elijah. They are *nothing* compared to Jesus—listen to Him.

Those are our marching orders. Just to reflect on my opening here, about the continued confusion in Protestantism and Catholicism, are they really listening to Jesus when they will not even keep the same day of the week that He kept, they will not even keep the same holy days that He kept. It seems as though they will do almost nothing in following Him. They have just shoved Him aside as if He were nothing. Instead, they want to do what is pleasing to them, and they do it in many cases with a clear conscience feeling that this is what the New Covenant teaches, because they have not been very well prepared in the churches of this world.

As we begin Hebrews, let us briefly make a few more comparisons with Leviticus. These are obvious ones. It is first not dictated by God to one human person appointed to lead such as Moses. Instead, God sent His Son, His only Son, preceded by John the Baptist. And His Son did not dictate the worship requirements as it was in Leviticus. Instead He, the living Word of God, *lived them* before the eyes of those who were following Him—right before their very eyes. Thus right from the get go, Hebrews is all ready vastly different from Leviticus.

Now let us review how Jesus began His responsibilities.

Mark 1:6-15 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandals strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven,

“You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to Him. Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

Jesus began His ministry by preaching the gospel. The gospel details the overall goal of God’s way of life. But He added to His teachings His personal examples of His conduct, the standards of God’s way of life, and He literally shared His life with the apostles in a combination of a physical and spiritual relationship with them. Now let us make this very personal and go to the book of John.

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Here we find out very clearly that even though Jesus preached the gospel it did not guarantee that even though people may have heard and understood to some degree (I do not know and it does not really matter), the person can be knowledgeable regarding particular things that are parts of the gospel. But that does not mean that the person has been drawn to Christ. It says here, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” So people can hear it, but though they may learn much it is not made a part of their mind and part of their respect and honor and obedience to God. It is not until God draws them that the gospel begins to have an effect on them.

In other words, God has to call *everyone*. Nobody just stumbles upon it and becomes a Christian. They are drawn to it, personally, individually by the Great God of heaven! That is what Jesus says; *no one*. God is involved in each and every person’s conversion, personally. How about them apples! Nobody is going to tell God who is going to be in His Family and who is not. He is in complete control of who and how many at any given time that He actually draws to Christ, for Christ to teach them further understanding in His Word.

I will tell you brethren, that is humbling! Of course then when they are drawn to Christ, Christ Himself has affirmation that this is a real one, and He is His to work with.

So do we believe and understand that this verse applies to us too. God’s Family and Jesus’ fellow workers are not being constructed with random pieces lying about on the ground, and God just casually says, “Oh there’s one, and there’s another. I’ll just grab them.” For a person like myself who has worked construction jobs, that is not the way even men do it. Every piece that went out of our factory had to go into a certain spot was already marked as to what it was on the blueprints and where that was to go. Do you realize that?

So God is not going to build what He is putting together as a part of His Family with random parts that Jesus happens to find lying around in the road. God makes sure that the person He chooses gets to Jesus Christ so it can be done. Let us go a little further on this by looking in John 15.

John 15:18-20 “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

I think that we can see that the New Covenant is far more personally and individually focused than merely ethnically as was the Old. You could float under the Old Covenant and never get noticed by God, if I can put it that way, because He was not calling you.

Now, I think we can see by the way Jesus carried out His responsibility, and whenever the book of Romans is added to this, that the New Covenant is very definitely family relationship orientated rather than nationally focused on Israel. In fact, the New Covenant is not going to be made with Israel and Judah until *after* Jesus returns. It is being made with those Jesus is receiving from the Father and the Father personally set them apart for Jesus to work with.

The New Covenant presents a family—father, mother, sister, brother—relationship rather than the master/servant relationship that seems to dominate the Old Covenant. The master/servant relationship is not eliminated entirely but it is far less obvious and is not emphasized or forced by any spirit of competition.

Now God desires believing, willing, giving, wholehearted cooperation flowing from family love for each other, and this, brethren, takes sacrifice.

It is at this point in this sermon that we will turn much more directly toward the beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews. However, we will not get there yet because I want to lay another foundational point. And this is a biggie.

There is something big that separates Jesus apart from what we would consider the world. It is very necessary that He is set apart in this way. So I want to show you, at least briefly, how broadly the Scriptures use the term “son.” Son or sons of God is where we are going to begin. Son of God is used only once in the Old Testament. It is interesting who said this.

Daniel 3:24-25 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors [What is going on here is Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego were just thrown into the fire.], “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

When Nebuchadnezzar said that, I believe that was a true report. Did Nebuchadnezzar mean *the* Son of God, the real one, or did he simply mean in general, a divine appearing Being. Nobody knows for certain. Who knows, he might have known more than we think. He might have said that it really was the Son of God there. He was certainly capable of doing such a thing. But we know that this is the only place in the Old Testament this combination of words appears. The “Son of God.”

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

Now in this case, because of the mention of Satan, I think it is pretty reliable to say that these were angelic beings. The same is true in Job 38:7 and Psalm 29:1, and there are other places as well. There is one thing we can add here. That particular phraseology “sons of God” or “Son of God,” is being

used to indicate some measure of closer than normal relationship with God. So in these that I just gave you as well as Job 38 and Psalm 29, in no case, though, on those occasions is the phrase implying *the* Son of God. I did not realize this appeared so often in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 14:1 “You are the children of the Lord your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead.”

It says children here but in modern translations, they have changed that to sons. There is a reason for that. We are to assume that those being referred to are faithful Israelites, because that happens also fairly frequently.

Hosea 1:10 “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there it shall be said to them, “You are sons of the living God.””

Once again, this passage is referring to faithful Israelites. Now actually there are many more, especially in the Old Testament. But these were obvious and easy to understand.

I did this because I want us first to experience reading a short overview of some of the magnitude of the qualities of the one God entrusted with this teaching responsibility and tie this to the family theme. Now I want to again want to tie it to Genesis 3. Mark it, this Son of God theme has a beginning. Interestingly, the Protestants are in agreement with us in that this is referring to the Son of God.

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

The “He” in this passage is referring to the real Son of God, but here He is just called “He.” Jesus is the promised Seed, the Messiah, who was born as Jesus of Nazareth, He has become our Savior, our Teacher, our Elder Brother, and now our King too. Before we get out of the Old Testament we will go to another prophecy regarding Him in Isaiah. This is referring to the Messiah, the real Son of God.

Isaiah 11:1-4 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips he shall slay the wicked.

Isaiah 11:10-11 “And in that day a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.” It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again a second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea.

These prophecies make it absolutely certain that the one being called there is *the* Son of God.

I took the time to go through these verses because I want us to first experience a brief overview of some of the magnitude of the awesome qualities of the One God entrusted this teaching responsibility and tie it into the family theme. Please turn to John 1.

Now it is because God's only begotten Son is the one directly dispatched from heaven to be His personal witness, revealing both the Father and the Son, clearly revealing Their purpose, being a living example of Their love to mankind and He is now His heir. So let us look at this brief overview of who He was.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Jesus is introduced in this first paragraph as the actual literal Creator of the universe and therefore man's Creator and life-giver, and Creator of all other life forms as well.

That all by itself must have been a stunning truth of awesome magnitude for the apostles to hold in their minds, as it should be in ours as well. But they had one element that we do not have. They could literally hear His voice as He taught, literally see Him, and actually reach out and touch Him knowing He was their Creator!

Now I am pretty sure they did not know this as an absolute certainty from the beginning. But they learned as they continued following Him and by the time of His crucifixion it had been burned into their minds and nothing could deter them from believing that He was their Creator and their Savior as well. Now let us go back to John 10.

John 10:29-31 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." Then the Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

He is talking about those who are now in the church who have the Spirit of God. Now, let us take a look at,

John 8:53-59 "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do you make Yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say He is your God.' Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

What a put down. He is telling these people who have been worshipping, maybe all of their lives, going to the Temple, going to the Feast and Jesus tells them, "You don't even know Him, but I do." That was a real put down. I want you to see how Jesus handled this position that He was in when He

really was God. What He is stressing in both of these events is His oneness with the Father and it is a characteristic that the apostle John was focused on more frequently than the other apostles. I am using these verses as a preview fuller and more exact description of Jesus' identity.

Jesus clearly stated to the people in Jerusalem and around there who He was a number of times. But that was too much for them to accept. Now there is more to what Jesus said, especially in John 8 at this point, than what we English speaking folk normally think. Judging by the Jews reaction apparently some of them grasped what He was saying to a much fuller extent than we normally do even with our growing up in a Protestant culture. Now let us get a better comprehension, a little bit more added to this as we go back to John 1.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Now listen carefully here. The way John wrote this in the Greek, it emphasizes a human family relationship such as Father and Son. My emphasis at this point is in the word "human." It also carries the sense of "only" which intensifies the sense of endearment. Really close. He is the "only Son," there are *no* others. It provides the idea of singleness, or uniqueness, one of a kind. Jesus is one of a kind. There is nobody else, anywhere, that is in His position, being what He is. No competitors. That is what John is saying. There is no one else like Him and there never ever has been. He is unique from all other usages from "son of God" in Scripture.

Do not lose sight of the truth that this is our Savior. There are people out there in the world that try to claim that Jesus was a created being. Let me tell you, what we are going through right here, puts those people in a category of those who simply do not understand.

In terms of their characteristics, Jesus and the Father are exactly the same. Look at what this works into. The apostle's objective was to demonstrate, as best he could through mere words, to emphasize the greatness of the glory he and his fellow apostles witnessed in their three and one-half years of relationship with Jesus. What was John literally doing with these words? He was severing Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph and Mary by means of mere words from all other sons of God set apart in Scripture and in all sense of earthly human generational relationships. He was basically saying Jesus' relationship with the Father was un-generated. The Father did not make the Son.

All human relationships are originated and continue through father and mother. Jesus' relationship with the Father was not so. There is nothing we humans could conceive of by way of a sexual act that the Father did to produce Jesus. This has a major impact on how we understand Their unity.

Again, recall John 10:30 where He said the Father and I are one. So, even though Jesus is a separate personality from the Father, everything that the Father is in character, Jesus also is. He is the one the apostles were directly taught by and followed about as He carried on with His responsibility.

What all this means is even as the Father has always existed, so has the Son. Jesus Christ was and is, every bit as much a God as the Father. They are One.