



January 6, 2019
Leviticus 17:1-14
Remember the Details of The Covenant
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Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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If you have your Bible, turn with me if you would to the book of Leviticus. I know it's probably one of your favorite books in all the Bible. If you ask people, what's your favorite book? Leviticus is right near the top, I'm sure. Anyway – this book is referred to throughout the scriptures because this book is where God, through Moses, began to lay down the order of worship for people – how things were supposed to work. Every detail of these words that God gave to Moses are reflective of what Jesus fulfilled when He came as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I want to read for you today, and probably one of the great communion passages of the Old Testament. It's from Leviticus 17, with a focus on the sacrifice and the blood, which is to be our focus today at Communion. This is the way Moses wrote it (Leviticus 17:1-14) –

The LORD said to Moses, ²“Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: ‘This is what the LORD has commanded: ³Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it ⁴instead 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 person shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; they have shed blood and must be cut off from their people. ⁵This is so the Israelites will bring to the LORD the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the LORD, at the entrance to the tent of meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings. ⁶The priest is to splash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ⁷They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.’

⁸“Say to them: ‘Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹and does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD must be cut off from the people of Israel.

¹⁰“I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people. ¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life. ¹² Therefore I say to the Israelites, “None of you may eat blood, nor may any foreigner residing among you eat blood.”

¹³“Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, ¹⁴ because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, “You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.”

Let’s pray for a moment: Lord, I want You to know today that, as much as I understand it, I really love You. I really love You and I am grateful for all that You are and all that You’ve done. To be able to come to a table like this at the start of a new year with my brothers and sisters here – is a great gift. But the seriousness of this, as well as the joy of this, is usually beyond our grasp. As we come to this table today, I hope You’ll help us to remember the details of this wonderful covenant You’ve made in the blood of Your Son, that we may have an even deeper appreciation and a right response as we begin this new year together, as we remember the details of the covenant. We’ll thank You God in Jesus’ name, amen.

I entered into another covenant a while ago. I agreed with a company to increase my internet speed. It’s really great because now I can make the same mistakes even faster. I found it interesting that when I agreed to this whole new term of things, this thing pops up on your screen and they want you to click on it after you’ve read all the terms and conditions, and how much you’re going to pay and all this stuff. There is a covenant on there. I don’t think anybody reads all this stuff. You know the thing at the bottom says “I have read all this stuff.” How many of you actually read the entire thing, every word? (pause) A couple of you! I read more than most, but what I’ve really been looking at lately with anything I sign, is what are the cancellation terms. Because there are details in there you don’t want to miss.

A covenant is an agreement between one party and another party, what they are going to provide and what you’re going to do in response to that. Covenants have details. Covenants are important. Covenants can be binding. If you are not paying attention to the details of what you’re signing, it can cost you a lot of money. It’s very interesting that God has entered into a covenant with us, and if we’re not paying attention to the details, it can end up costing you your eternity. This is why, at the beginning of the year, we’re taking a few moments to remember the details of this covenant.

Details are important. One missed letter in a prescription, or a wrong number on a phone, or a missed ingredient in a recipe can affect everything. One missed detail of a covenant agreement between God and us can affect your eternity. That is the significance of the details of Leviticus 17.

Leviticus 17 addresses the details of a covenant God established with His people through Moses. Leviticus is the detail of the Old Covenant law that God established to govern the lives and worship of His covenant people, in their relationship with Him. In other words God would do certain things, but the people were responsible to do certain things. It was God’s instruction to the people on when and where and how they were to worship here in Leviticus 17, especially on how they were to present their sacrificial offerings. Chapter 17 begins with a section of God’s word often referred to as the Holiness Code. This is important because it tells us in the New Testament that without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Central to the Holiness Code were two prohibitions designed to help God’s covenant people remain faithful to the agreement, to the covenant.

Sacrifice only at the altar at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. That was the first provision. So the Old Testament tabernacle, and eventually at the temple – would be the only place where you'd be able to present your sacrifice.

The second provision was: don't eat the blood of any animal. In these two prohibitions, we find a direct correlation with the details of our Communion observance when Jesus instituted the New Covenant in His blood.

Communion is the remembrance of the death of Jesus. Remember the apostle Paul, who proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 11:26 ²⁶“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” This is a memorial. A covenant, instituted in His blood. Eating this, as we've shared many times – will not make you a Christian. Eating this meal will not get your sins forgiven. Eating this meal won't get you into heaven. The only way to experience forgiveness like that, is by entering into a relationship with God through faith and the sufficiency of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. But eating this as Jesus intended can help us to remember two important details concerning this covenant that no one can afford to miss, because **Communion reminds us of the covenant details that point the way to Jesus.**

What are those details? The first, parallel with Leviticus 17, is that **there are not many ways to God, there is only one and His name is Jesus. And Jesus' blood is the only payment acceptable to God. In Communion we remember that Jesus is the only way to God.**

In Leviticus 17, Moses put it like this (v 8-9)

⁸“Say to them: ‘Any Israelite or any foreigner [everyone, therefore] residing among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹and does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD must be cut off from the people of Israel.

We are folks who like multiple options. We don't like to be limited. We talked about the 80,000 options at Starbucks at Christmas time. But it isn't limited to there. I see it every time I go to the store. We have grandkids, so we go through a lot of Gold Fish crackers. It used to be, you would go buy Gold Fish crackers, but not any more. Now you have choices to make: original, cheddar, pretzel, pretzel with salt, pretzel with no salt, mini, regular, plain, colored. They have a brand new one coming out. I haven't even dealt with that one yet. Then, you remember when you went to get something to eat, you used to go order a hamburger? When I was a kid we went to Grace's Kitchenette. You'd order a hamburger and that's what you got. Now, you have to decide if you want a single, double, triple, bacon, 4 by 4, whopper, sliders, kings or juniors. Then after you make that decision, they always ask you, “Is that with cheese or no cheese?” Who would ever believe you could do so much with a cow, but it has happened. How about Oreos? Used to be my mom would say, go get a bag of Oreos. You can't do that any more. Now it's – double stuff, chocolate, vanilla, vanilla with chocolate, chocolate with vanilla, vanilla with vanilla, minis, orange crème, strawberry crème, dipped in fudge or no fudge, dark chocolate, light chocolate. Retail has learned that if you don't provide people with options, they'll go somewhere else.

This is one of the reasons why so many people move away from the message of the gospel. It's too narrow. When you tell them there is only one way to God, they don't like it. So they try to find other options. Satan is more than happy to provide with all the options you want, as long as you don't choose Jesus as the only way.

People have a tendency to approach their relationship with God like that. People want gods they can define, control and explain. They want gods who ask little and give much. They want gods who are all-

inclusive, who have no absolutes and exist to make us feel good and to serve us. I found it very interesting. I saw a billboard out on Highway 4, about another church. I know nothing about this church at this point. They are apparently fairly new. This is no contradiction. I don't know what they're about, but the sign simply said, "It's all about a better you." I'm thinking, *no it isn't! No it isn't all about a better me.* It's all about knowing Him.

Many pseudo-Christian and New Age groups and liberal churches are popular because they offer the people the option of worshipping just about any version of god they choose. The most popular versions of god to be chosen are the gods who allow us to be in charge, to have what we want, to be in control and call the shots. It's the same lie that Satan put out in the Garden, "You can be as God."

So the people coming out of Egypt with Moses proved to be no different. They wanted to worship whenever and wherever and however they wanted, forming their own gods. So God put a prohibition in place. You can't sacrifice under the trees to anything you want. You can't go out and worship the desert goat idols and serve them. You can't sacrifice on the rocks or under the trees. He put a detail in to remind the people that there is only one God, and there is only one way to God. So God built a tabernacle, filled it with His presence and designated an altar in front of it as the only place to come to God.

That's why it says (Leviticus 17:5-9) --

⁵ This is so the Israelites will bring to the LORD the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the LORD, at the entrance to the tent of meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings. ⁶ The priest is to splash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ⁷ They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.'

⁸ "Say to them: 'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹ and does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD must be cut off from the people of Israel.'

The multiple-option approach to God (that you can come any way you want, any time you want, that ignores covenant details) was leading the people far from God. Some were even worshipping goat idols and the demon spirits of the desert that they believed were associated with those places, seeking their favor.

God reminded them of an important detail of His covenant: there are not many gods; there is only one. There aren't many ways to God, there is only one. Bring the sacrifice I accept at the right time to the right priest at the right place – or be cut off from your people. That detail of the Old Covenant pointed to the same detail in this New Covenant: when Jesus established the New Covenant, He declared that His sacrifice on the cross was the only way to come to God. Remember He said, "This bread is My body. It is given for you." That's why the word became flesh – so He could be that sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:5-7 –

⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
⁶with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased.
⁷Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—
I have come to do your will, my God.’”

It goes on to say (Hebrews 10:10) –¹⁰ “And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

He is the sacrifice. The cross was the altar. Jesus was also the high priest who offered it to God at the perfect tabernacle (or temple) in heaven. Hebrews 10 goes on to say (v 14) “By that one sacrifice, He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

When Jesus offered Himself at the altar of the cross, He poured His blood out there for sure, but the real blood He poured out was at the temple in heaven, at the altar, the only altar God would accept with the only blood He would accept, through the only body that was pure enough to be His sacrifice.

That’s why Jesus, at the Last Supper, made a statement that was so clear that no one could misunderstand Him. John 14:6 – ⁶ “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

There aren’t many gods; there is only one. There aren’t many ways to God, there is only one. You can’t get to God with any other sacrifice or any other priest, or any other tabernacle at any other altar. There is only one sacrifice acceptable to God for our salvation, and that was offered on the altar of a cross, and on the altar in heaven.

That’s why Peter said (Acts 4:12), ¹² “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

Or why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:13-14), ¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

The road to life is extremely narrow. In fact, it is just one person wide. You come through Jesus or you don’t come at all. Jesus is the only way to God. That is a detail of the covenant no one can afford to miss.

Not only is He the only to God, but in Communion, we remember that Jesus’ blood is the only payment acceptable to God. In Leviticus 17, Moses wrote this in vs 10-14 (God is speaking) :

¹⁰ “I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people. ¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life. ¹² Therefore I say to the Israelites, ‘None of you may eat blood, nor may any foreigner residing among you eat blood.’”

¹³ “Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, ¹⁴ because the life of every creature is its

blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, “You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.”

Blood is not something we want to see a lot of. Many of us get queasy going to give blood. I remember when I worked at Marandino Foods in the meat department. We spent a lot of time, keeping as much as blood as possible out of the packages because blood in the package doesn't sell.

We do not like blood. But the shedding of Jesus' blood must never be forgotten. It's the shedding of His blood that brings forgiveness for our sins. You see, God's law commanded that, without the shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness. That's why it says (Leviticus 17:10-12) –

¹⁰ “I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people. ¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. ¹² Therefore I say to the Israelites, “None of you may eat blood, nor may any foreigner residing among you eat blood.”

It is the blood that makes the payment, atonement. Remember God said, “I have given it to you for this purpose.” Remember that phrase: “I have given it to you. This is for you.”

The wages of sin is death. God is life. To be separated from God for any reason is the very definition of death. The Bible talks about three kinds of death: physical death, when our soul and spirit separate from our body. Spiritual death, which we're all born into; because of sin – we are separated from God and have no relationship with Him. And eternal death – if you die physically while you are dead spiritually, you'll be dead eternally; you'll be put away from God forever in a Christless hell.

The life, God said, is in the blood. There are no magical powers in blood. Blood alone has no life without a body to flow in. But a body has no life without the blood. No creature can live without blood. To shed blood is to shed life and to bring death. That's a detail that God wanted no one to miss.

That's why the Israelites, under the Old Covenant, were never to disrespect the blood. So they were never to eat it like a common food, because it was given to make atonement for them. Blood was to be poured out and with it, the life of the animal would be poured out. Whether it was to make a meal or to present as a sacrifice, blood, spilled out, brought death. So every time an animal was killed, the blood had to be poured on the ground, and respectfully covered with earth. Or, when killed as a sacrifice, the blood would be sprinkled on the altar by a priest and the rest of it poured out at the base of the altar, to make atonement.

Any other use of blood cheapened its value as the means of payment. The person who devalued it would be cut off from God. These sacrifices were held over and over and over, until the arrival of God's Lamb, the one whose blood would take away the sins of the world for all time.

Do you see how God through the centuries, had built such a respect for the blood, that people would not eat it. When they killed an animal while hunting, or killed an animal that they were getting ready to use as a meal – they carefully disposed of that blood with respect. They were teaching an entire nation to have respect for the blood. So that when Jesus came, and He began to talk about the new payment in His blood, those Jews would immediately recognize the significance of what He was saying.

That's why Jesus, at Communion, took the cup and declared, "This cup is now the New Covenant in My blood." MY blood. "It is poured out for the forgiveness of many." See the terms He was using? He said this is for you. It's for you. The very same thing God told Moses.

This is why the New Testament writers were so clear about the purpose and value of Jesus' shed blood.

The whole book of Hebrews is like a running commentary on the Old Testament. Hebrews 9:12-15 -

¹² He [Jesus] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

He is talking about coming into the very tabernacle of God in heaven.

¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

The first covenant – and all those sacrifices – could never totally cleanse you. It could only make you ceremonially clean until you needed to do the next sacrifice. It always pointed to the need for an ultimate sacrifice that would take away sin for all time.

That's why you never want, as a Christian, to cheapen the value of the blood shed for us by continuing to live a life of deliberate sin. Hebrews was very careful to go on, in Hebrews 10:26-29 --

²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left*, ²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸ Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

* God can't offer another one; He has already given the ultimate one.

If you say "I am a Christian and I have invited Christ into my life," then you are saying you have accepted His sacrifice as the only way to God. "I have accepted His blood as my only payment and I will not cheapen or disrespect the blood of this cup."

This is why Paul told the Corinthians to examine themselves before participating in this covenant remembrance, and to not eat or drink it in an unworthy manner. All of us sin. I do and you do, but it better not be deliberate. If it is, we better come and get it right with God, right away. If there are things that need to be repented of, we better get on the mark and ask God to help us with that repentance. You do not want to linger in known sin.

When you come to the Communion table, this is a time for us to get clean with God, to confess those things. You never want to eat of this table when your heart is not right.

That's why Paul said (1 Corinthians 11:27-32) –

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep [ie, died]. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

This is a good thing, to come to this table and let God, through His Spirit, search your heart and confess the things we know aren't right, and to repent of those things that need to be changed. These are details of a covenant we cannot afford to miss.

Details make a difference.

A while ago, Karla and I tried an on-line free trial offer of some product that she was interested in. We didn't like the product, so we didn't order any more. So you can imagine our surprise when, the next month, another shipment of the same stuff came, along with a bill this time. It wasn't so free. So, we called them up and said, "Hey! We didn't order this." They said, "Oh, yes you did. Didn't you read the agreement? You get the free trial, but if you don't want it, you have to call and cancel it within so many days, or you're automatically signed up for future shipments.

It's a detail we had missed. Fortunately, we could still cancel at any time. But what if it had been a yearlong commitment? Or multiyear? We would have had boxes of this stuff we didn't want. And it wasn't cheap!

One detail missed could have cost us a lot. One detail missed in this new covenant with Jesus, could cost you forever.

So, Jesus instituted the New Covenant in His blood, and the means by which we were to remember the details. "This bread," He said, "Is My body. This cup is My blood. It is given for you. As often as you eat it, remember Me." Because there is only one God and only one way to God. That is by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the altar of the cross. There is only one acceptable payment for sin that can make atonement and that is the blood of Jesus, who as our faithful high priest, offered His own blood on the altar in heaven. These are the details of the New Covenant, the details that make the difference between eternal death and eternal life. God wanted to make sure that no one missed the way to God in Moses' day. And those all foreshadowed the fact that God doesn't want anyone to miss the details of the covenant of the blood of Jesus.

Father, I want to thank You today for this reminder. I honestly can't think of a better way to begin a new year. Being reminded of the details of a covenant which we have entered, accepting the sacrifice of the body of Jesus and the spilled and poured out blood by our high priest. There is only one way to God. There is only one payment acceptable to God. You said You have given these to make atonement for our sin and to bring us life. So God as we come to this table today, help us with deep gratitude. Help us

to confess. Help us to repent. Help us to be a people clean before God, for without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Thank You God for this reminder today. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.