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## SESSION ELEVEN

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# Atonement Sacrifices (Part II)

### SESSION SUMMARY

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In this session, we continue our study of Leviticus by examining the sin offering and the restitution offering, two mandatory offerings that would allow God's children to live in harmony with Him and with one another. The sin offering represented the purification of the people before God. The restitution offering served to "repair" the damage caused by sin and cleanse the offender's conscience. These offerings pointed forward to Jesus Christ, whose work purifies our hearts, cleanses our consciences, and frees us to do good deeds for His glory.

### SCRIPTURE

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Leviticus 5:1-19; Hebrews 9:13-14; 13:11-12

# THE POINT

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**Atonement is needed for purification and cleansing.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

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### Option 1

- **When you drop food on the floor, do you go by the “three second rule”? Why or why not?**
- **Why do we want our food and drink to be pure?**

Think about the last glass of water you drank or the last plate of food you ate at a restaurant. You counted on that drink and food to be pure. However, it may not have been as pure as you expected. Food contamination makes millions of people sick every year.

Share some of the following impurity levels in foods and how they might cause foodborne illness.<sup>1</sup>

- Chocolate can average 60 or more insect fragments per 100 grams and 1 or more rodent hairs per 100 grams.
  - Ice Cream can be the host for salmonella and staphylococcus bacteria.
  - Strawberries contain an average mold count of 45-55% or more.
  - Popcorn can contain one or more rodent pellets in selected subsamples.
  - Cheese is pasteurized to make it safe—but unpasteurized cheese may contain the pathogenic bacteria listeria which can cause miscarriages in pregnant women.
- **It may be OK for our food and water to have some impurities—to be less than pure. But is that statement true for our Christian lives? Why or why not?**

The ancient Israelites may not have known about bacteria, but they were well acquainted with the idea of “clean” and “unclean,” or “pure” and “contaminated.” The Lord was interested in preserving the purity of His people because He wanted their hearts to reflect His heart. These stringent categories of “clean” and “unclean” helped get across God’s desire for purity.

### Option 2

Before the session, gather the following items: clear pitcher filled with water, red food coloring, small cup of bleach, eyedropper, spoon. As students arrive, invite them to share some sins they’ve been guilty of in the past. Be sure to share a few sins you’ve been guilty of as well. As you share, add a few drops of food coloring to the water. State that in the same way food coloring contaminates water, sin contaminates our relationship with God and with others.

- **When have you wished you could “undo” a sin? Is that even possible? Explain.**

Slowly stir in the bleach until the water becomes clear again. Point out that while there’s nothing we can do to remove the stain of sin in our lives, the blood of Christ makes it possible for us to be forgiven and made pure.

\* Note: Be sure to test the red water/bleach activity before using it in your session.

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

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**Atonement is needed for purification and cleansing.**

## CHARACTERS

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- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Moses:** biblical patriarch; chosen by God to lead His people out of captivity and to the promised land
- **Aaron:** older brother of Moses; chosen by God to serve as Moses' spokesman and later to become Israel's first high priest.

## PLOT

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Our journey into the sacrifices of the Old Testament—their meaning, purpose, and differences, etc.—continues as we look at two more: the sin offering and the restitution offering. It is important at this point in the story to be reminded that readers of the Bible today can't chalk these sacrifices up as being primitive practices of an ancient people group, but instead recognize that the biblical writers were giving us a glimpse into the perfect future sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. These offerings pointed forward to Jesus Christ, whose work purifies our hearts, cleanses our consciences, and frees us to do good deeds for His glory.

**ATONEMENT  
SACRIFICES  
(PART II)***The sin and  
restitution offerings  
are explained.***MOSES'  
FAREWELL  
ADDRESS***Moses' final  
instructions to the  
children of Israel.*

## THE SIN OFFERING

When it came to certain situations, there were cases where an Israelite might sin and only later become aware that he or she had violated God's law. What was to be done once they realized they had sinned? Because of the seriousness of sin, even unintentional sin defiled a person. It still had to be dealt with so that the sinner could be cleansed. As severe as this might seem to us, even today we understand the saying, "Ignorance of the law is no excuse." It is presumed that people of a jurisdiction know the laws that apply; otherwise, ignorance would be a foolproof excuse.

For Israelites, the sin offering became the way for certain unintentional sins to be remedied. It was God's solution for providing purification for those who were unclean. When talking about the sin offering, our story in Leviticus shows us how guilt was symbolically transferred from the unclean person to the clean sacrifice through the act of touching the animal being offered. It was only through this physical contact that atonement and restoration would take place.

**When someone sins in any of these ways: If he has seen, heard, or known about something he has witnessed, and did not respond to a public call to testify, he is responsible for his sin. Or if someone touches anything unclean—a carcass of an unclean wild animal, or unclean livestock, or an unclean swarming creature—without being aware of it, he is unclean and guilty. Or if he touches human uncleanness—any uncleanness by which one can become defiled—without being aware of it, but later recognizes it, he is guilty. Or if someone swears rashly to do what is good or evil—concerning anything a person may speak rashly in an oath—without being aware of it, but later recognizes it, he incurs guilt in such an instance. If someone incurs guilt in one of these cases, he is to confess he has committed that sin. He must bring his restitution for the sin he has committed to the LORD: a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement on his behalf for his sin. (Lev. 5:1-6; For a complete reading of the text, also see verses 7-19.)**

As with the fellowship offering, so with the sin offering: part of the sacrifice was to be burned; part was to be eaten, but only by the priests, not by the offerer (Lev. 6:25-29). There was to be a ceremony in which the offender laid hands on the sacrificial animal (4:4,15,24,29). There was a prescribed ritual for dealing with the blood of any animal slaughtered as a sin offering (4:6-7,16-18,25; 5:9). The offering was specifically and repeatedly called an "atonement" (4:20,26,31; 5:6,10,13; 6:30).

The blood was literally applied as a picture of purification. Those who had become unclean were pronounced ritually clean as a result of the sin offering. Another essential Israelite ritual was the annual Day of Atonement ceremony, detailed in Leviticus 16. Included in the regulations was the requirement that the high priest was to “enter the most holy place in this way: with a young bull for a sin offering” (Lev. 16:3).

- **What do you do when you realize you’ve sinned? Do you try to hide your sin from God or do you admit you’ve made a mistake and repent? If you deny it, does that make you any less guilty? Explain.** (p. 72, PSG)

Though we don’t have to offer sacrifices anymore, acknowledging sin and making things right is still important to God today.

## GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

“Leviticus 16 describes the ritual of the Day of Atonement, a way of removing the impact of sin and uncleanness. First, the priest made a sacrifice for himself, so that he was prepared to do the same for the community. Then two goats were brought, and one was chosen for sacrifice. It was offered as a purification offering, and the blood was used to cleanse the sanctuary of any sin and uncleanness. The priest then took the other goat, the scapegoat, and confessed the sin of the people with his hands over the goat, symbolically passing the sin of the people to the goat. Then the goat was taken into the wilderness, a significant symbol of the removal of the sins of the people. This central ritual assumed that ancient Israel would encounter sin and uncleanness. Since God is perfectly holy, the Lord could not dwell among sin and that which is unclean. This ritual then provided a means of removing sin and uncleanness so that God could continue to dwell among the people and to be present in the sanctuary to give them life.”<sup>2</sup>

## THE RESTITUTION OFFERING

Our consciences hurt when we’ve hurt another. It’s human nature to try to set things straight when we know we’ve messed up. The Israelite people felt the same way. God’s answer to this need was the restitution offering. In some English Bibles, this sacrifice has been variously translated the guilt offering, the trespass offering, or the reparation offering.

The restitution offering was the fifth (and final) offering that Yahweh specified. It shared some features with the sin offering. Like the sin offering, it was concerned with the remedy for unintentional sins, but it focused on repairing the damage done to others because they had been deprived of what was rightfully theirs. Here is how Leviticus 5 describes the restitution offering:

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses: “If someone offends by sinning unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD’s holy things, he must**

bring his restitution offering to the LORD: an unblemished ram from the flock (based on your assessment of its value in silver shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel) as a restitution offering. He must make restitution for his sin regarding any holy thing, adding a fifth of its value to it, and give it to the priest. Then the priest will make atonement on his behalf with the ram of the restitution offering, and he will be forgiven. If someone sins and without knowing it violates any of the LORD's commands concerning anything prohibited, he bears the consequences of his guilt. He must bring an unblemished ram from the flock according to your assessment of its value as a restitution offering to the priest. Then the priest will make atonement on his behalf for the error he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven. It is a restitution offering; he is indeed guilty before the LORD." (Lev. 5:14-19)

The restitution offering was God's way of making things right, especially when a "dollar amount" could be attached to the damage done.

- **Do you seek to make things right when you realize you've hurt someone? Why is this important?** (p. 73, PSG)
- **How do we get right with God when we sin today?** (p. 73, PSG)

Getting right with God is essential. When your sin affects other people, you have to make things right with them, as well.

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

### Various Theories of the Atonement

*Moral Influence Theory: According to this theory, Christ's sacrifice should be seen as a demonstration of God's love, a display that produces a change of attitude within humanity. This theory is part but not all of what Christ accomplished on the cross since it leaves out God's wrath against sinners and His requirement of satisfaction for sin. Still, it does remind us that the cross is the greatest example of God's love, and this love must provoke gratitude and praise on our behalf.*

*Governmental Theory: According to this theory, the cross of Christ is the ultimate demonstration of God's hatred for sin. Understanding the seriousness with which God takes sin, humanity is motivated to cease from sinning. While this view portrays Christ as suffering for us, it does not lift Him up as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sin.*

*Ransom Theory: According to this theory, Christ's atonement was a cosmic victory over sin, Satan, and death. The ransom theory at its best, however, does not see the ransom as being owed to Satan, but as being offered to God.*

*Satisfaction Theory: According to this theory, the atonement of Christ satisfies every requirement for God to be able to forgive the failures of humanity. God has not been given the proper honor He is due; in His death, Jesus compensated for the failure to give honor by willingly going to the cross as the God-man to pay the price for humanity's sins.*

## TIMELINE

*Beginning Spring 2016*

### **SCOUTING THE PROMISED LAND**

*The spies deliver their report.*

### **THE BRONZE SERPENT**

*The people look and are healed.*

### **THE PARTING OF THE JORDAN**

*God calls Joshua to lead His people.*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

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The New Testament writer of the Book of Hebrews clearly knew the passage from Leviticus about the sin offering on the Day of Atonement. He believed it prefigured Jesus' bloody death outside the gates of Jerusalem:

**For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the most holy place by the high priest as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood. (Heb. 13:11-12)**

The death of Jesus is like the sin offering on the Day of Atonement in these ways:

- The blood brought about cleansing.
- The sacrifice was “outside the camp.”

The death of Jesus was unlike the sin offering in these ways:

- “We have an altar” (Heb. 13:10) from which we may eat, unlike the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement from which none, not even priests, could eat. We have a higher privilege than the Israelite priests did.
- Jesus' blood truly brought about the sanctification—setting apart as pure and holy—of His people. The sprinkled blood of the sin offering cleansed from sin and ritual uncleanness only symbolically.

In addition, the author of Hebrews specifically dealt with the issue of how Jesus' death relates to the conscience of a sinner who trusts in Christ:

**For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow, sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:13-14)**

Thus, in Hebrews 9:14, the author exclaimed “how much more” is accomplished through “the blood of the Messiah”:

- The Israelites presented unblemished animals; Christ was the only human ever “without blemish” and therefore fit to be our substitution in atonement.
- Christ was both the sacrifice and the high priest (because he “offered Himself”).
- Christ was fully accepted by God as a once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:14).
- Through Jesus' death, believers have consciences that are completely and forever cleansed, unlike the Israelite restitution offering, which dealt only with immediate defilement of the offender's conscience.
- Because of this cleansing, believers have been set free “to serve the living God.”
- Good works cannot save. Salvation in Christ brings people into joyful service to God. In Hebrews 9:13-14, the author showed that all three Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or God, the Messiah, and eternal Spirit) have brought about our full salvation.

# YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **When it came to the sin offering, Leviticus tells us the role of confession on the part of the offerer. Why do you think a heart-felt confession is important?**  
*Confession is important because through it, we are agreeing with God that we have sinned against Him and are deserving of punishment. Not only that, but through confession we are also recognizing that we need God's grace and mercy to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- **How does the sin offering challenge the way we think about our own purity?**  
*Answers to this question will vary.*
- **Apart from Jesus, what are some ways people try to alleviate a guilty conscience?**  
*Some people try to perform good works, such as helping the needy or volunteering to serve their community. While those are good things to do, they cannot be done with the mind-set that anything we can do can take away the guilt of sin.*
- **How does a cleansed conscience empower us to serve God? How does an unclean conscience hinder our mission?**  
*Answers to this question will vary.*

### HIS STORY

*God's Story of Redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

### YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

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Everyone is aware of their inner conscience—that inner impression that certain behaviors and thoughts within their lives are wrong. However, too often people try to address the conscience with self-help techniques. If they have a speech problem, they focus on using certain words (and avoiding others). If it is an anger problem, they look for ways to control their temper. However, the problem with these strategies is that they never get to the root of the issue—namely, that it is a heart problem.

- **Have you ever just tried harder when addressing moral shortcomings in your life? How did that work out? Why is it important to address the heart when dealing with behavior?** *More than likely, attempts of trying harder to correct bad behavior failed because only the behavior was addressed, and not the heart. Our hearts are at the root of all we do, which is why we need a new heart from Christ in order to live as He commands us to.*
- **Why is it so important that your words, decisions, and actions be different than those who aren't living for Christ?** *Answers to this question will vary.*



## HEART

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Purity of heart has always been of great importance for God. Jesus went to great lengths to emphasize purity of heart in His teachings. For example, it was not only the act of adultery that was evil, it was also the lustful heart behind the act (Matt. 5:28). Purity matters to God, and therefore it should matter to God's people. Like God Himself, Christians should be set apart from the rest of the world, demonstrating the purity that has been freely received through the moral perfection of Christ on their behalf.

- **Think about the words you've used today when talking with your parents, friends, teachers, and others. How would you (or others) rate the condition of your heart based on your words?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **When you consider the decisions you've made over the past 24 hours, would Jesus be pleased? Why or why not?** *Answers to this question will vary.*



## HANDS

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Purification and restitution always lead to evangelization. If we have been the recipients of these gifts through the sacrificial death of Christ on our behalf, we should likewise proclaim to others how purification of sins is found in the atoning death of Christ alone for their sins.

- **What evidence do your thoughts, words, and actions give to others that you are a Christian?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How can you make sure your words and actions are a reflection of Christ this week? In what ways can this be a testimony to the purification and restitution you've received from Christ?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

## ► ADDITIONAL INFO

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### LEADER PACK

For this session, point out item #11 to the students, which contains an informational chart regarding the sacrifices of the Old Testament.

### SOURCES

1. "Defect Levels Handbook," U.S. Food and Drug Administration [online], [accessed 11 June 2015]. Available from the Internet: [www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation).
2. *Holman Illustrated Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 145.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to [lifeway.com/storystart15](http://lifeway.com/storystart15))**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**