

The Compass

Week 7

OT Readings – Exod. 35:10 - Lev. 9:6
NT Readings – Matt. 27:32 - Mark 4:25

Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

Old Testament

- The final chapters of Exodus involve details on the construction and completion of the tabernacle and the installation of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood. Note especially the final verses of Exodus (40:34-38). God's manifest presence fills the tabernacle and His glory is seen; God now lives among His people!¹
- As we enter the very foreign territory of Leviticus, be sure to check out the Leviticus book introduction.
- Lev. 1-7 is a detailed description of various kinds of sacrifices and offerings, "what is described is not their function or meaning but their proper preparation."² So what is their "function and meaning?" See Difficult Question below.

New Testament

- Matthew ends with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Matthew's final verses (28:16-20) are one of the Great Commission passages.³
- Mark introduces his readers to Jesus. Jesus first words (Mk. 1:15) describe His ministry and mission, the "kingdom of God."
- Jesus demonstrates through His acts of healing and deliverance the reality that God's kingdom has invaded the world. As you read these accounts, think about what that would look like in your community!
- Opposition surfaces almost immediately. As is typical, it comes not from the irreligious, but the religious. Jesus does not fit into their tightly controlled and defined box. What about yours?⁴

Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

Mark shatters any illusions about Jesus being "meek and mild, wouldn't hurt a fly." He shows Jesus to be a man of action, decisive and uncompromising, as well as filled with compassion. He is the channel of the Holy Spirit's power which is manifested in dramatic and *disruptive* ways. Put yourself in any of the stories from this week and ask, "What would it have been like to be present when Jesus healed, cast out demons, addressed the religious of His day?" You will find yourself in an encounter with a *disruptive* God. If you like order and the status quo, beware! Jesus offers none of these! There is a holy *disorder* in all He does. His road to freedom and new life is uncomfortable and challenging; but only His way brings peace, power and newness. In a world that cannot offer security and stability, God alone is the unchanging One. Yet He is out to change everything. Such is the nature of His kingdom invasion!⁵

Application: "What about me? How does this apply?"

Mark 4:1-20. The so-called parable of the soils given to the crowd (4:1-9) is explained by Jesus to His disciples (4:13-20). He expected them to get it (4:13). The focus of the parable is on the different "soils," how each was received the word and the implications. Do they bear fruit or not? Is Jesus simply describing what seemed true in His ministry or does He have a deeper point?

It seems Jesus *expectation* is that His word will bring forth fruit in the soil of our lives. In other words, fruitfulness is to be *normal* for us. Take careful note of those things which Jesus mentions that prevent

fruitfulness – affliction, worries of the world, deceitfulness of riches, desire for other things. We can be distracted away from Him (Heb. 2:1). What about you? Is He the centerpiece of your life? Is your life bringing forth fruit because of His word and His Spirit?

Perhaps the most shocking implication from this parable is one we might easily overlook. There simply is no place in the kingdom for those who do not bear fruit. No wonder Jesus says we should “listen and understand” (4:9).⁶

Difficult Question of the Week

Q. Why would God require all of these sacrifices?

You no doubt noticed in your reading of Lev. 1-7 that different kinds of sacrifices and offerings were commanded and each having different purposes. We might summarize them: sin offerings, guilt offerings, burnt offerings and peace or fellowship offerings.

Sin and guilt offerings were to show that sin is serious and that it creates problems in our relationship with God. Sin required atonement⁷ and then forgiveness was given. Sin and guilt offerings were but *one* part of a larger sacrificial system that allowed for personal and spontaneous response to God. Burnt offerings expressed devotion and consecration to God; peace offerings gratitude and thankfulness. In addition, the peace offerings were eaten; God was to receive a portion (representatively) and the worshipper a portion, the idea being to share a meal with God as an expression of genuine fellowship and relationship.

Micah 6:6-8 makes clear that the sacrifices were never intended as an end in themselves. God didn't *need* them. However, He was using the concrete and tangible of these sacrifices to teach certain truths about what it meant to worship and to relate with God.⁸

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¹ God's desire to be with us is a theme which runs throughout the whole of the Bible. In Jesus, God moves from the tabernacle/temple to “tabernacle” among us to - become one of us so we might fully know Him. Note: John 1:14 (NLT) Jesus “became human” is the Greek “tabernacled,” thus a direct allusion to the OT tabernacle as the place where God is present.

² Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 46.

³ Each of the Gospels has a “commissioning” passage like this one: Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-22.

⁴ We are quick to think that had we been there, we would not have reacted like the religious of Jesus day. But would we? Maybe a better question is, “How would we react if Jesus walked into our church service on a Sunday and began to do the things He did (and does)?” Jesus does not fit well into *our* tightly organized and controlled versions of God. Historic revival, where God comes in power, has shown this to be the case. Want to read about how this looks in revival? Get a copy of Michael Brown's *From Holy Laughter to Holy Fire*.

⁵ I love Rev. 21:5. Written to a 1st century audience, God says something like this, “I am in the process right now of making everything new – away with the old, its time for radical and thorough going change!” God is still busy with that same agenda.

⁶ Some might disagree, “Surely this not a parable about salvation!?” Yet, to be in the kingdom is the very essence of salvation. In fact, salvation is what comes to us *because* we have submitted to His kingship, entered His kingdom and have receptive hearts toward Jesus' word to us. To say that we can be negligent concerning Jesus' word to us and yet be “saved” is to misunderstand the very heart of the gospel message. Read the parallels in Matt. 13:1f. and especially Luke 8:4-15 where salvation and the “good heart” are specifically related.

⁷ To be discussed in weeks to come.

⁸ Want to think more about how God was trying to teach truth through the sacrifices and other parts of the OT law? Consider the following resources:

- A current and *excellent* read is Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?* (2011) He gives considerable insight into the reasons behind the various aspects of the OT law. Also, he has good sections on God as a “warrior God” and deals with the violence found in the OT. We will discuss this more when we get to Joshua.
- Try James Walker, *The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation*. (1845) Don't let the title or the book's age shake you; Walker presents a clear picture of the “why” behind the Torah (OT instruction or law). Copies are available on Amazon or download it digitally for free:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=TPs2AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=walker+the+philosophy+of+t>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=the+plan+of+salvation&hl=en&sa=X&ei=m7cdT8r8J9HqggferImiCw&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>

- Two basic commentaries are helpful. The most basic and easiest to read is John Goldingay, *Exodus and Leviticus for Everyone*. The second, R.K. Harrison, *Leviticus*, (Tyndale Old Testament Commentary) has more detail but is not overly complex or scholarly.