

Leviticus 4

Gill-This chapter contains the law of the sin offering, which was offered for sins committed through ignorance, error, and mistake, #Le 4:1,2 and gives an account of the matter of them, and the rites belonging thereunto, which were different according to the persons for whom it was made, as for the anointed priest, #Le 4:3-12 for the whole congregation, #Le 4:13-21 and for the ruler, #Le 4:22-26 and for any of the common people, #Le 4:27-35.

This chapter gives to us the sin-offerings of the four classes of people in the nation of Israel: the priests, the congregation as a whole, the civil ruler and the common man who is none of the above. When we look at the sin offering for each, we see that the four classes of people are here listed in order of "importance" or accountability before God.

[Let me mention the Geneva marginal note here for v. 2: "That is, of negligence or ignorance, specially in the ceremonial law: for otherwise the punishment for crime are appointed according to the transgression, Num. 25:25."]

We know that all of the carnal ordinances and sacrifices of the law (Lev 4 &c.) were *a figure* and pattern for the better things which were to come in Christ; we know that none of what was done here in Leviticus 4 could solve the problem of both a changed heart toward the law of God and a clear conscience, Hebrews chapters 9 & 10. So as we look at some points from Leviticus 4, we are only taking some obvious implications for our day: accountability before God according to our individual responsibility, divine revelation and provided grace (cf. Mat 25:15; Lu 12:47; Eph 4:7; Col 1:29; Ja 4:7; 1 Pet 4:10, &c.).

Notice four things common with all four classes:

First, all are held to the same standard, *If a soul shall sin*, v. 2. Thus, every living soul is included in this chapter; there are no exceptions or privileged class, cf. Romans 2.

Second, ***through ignorance...*** It does not say what to do about intentional sin; under the OT law of the sin-offering, there was no provision made for intentional sin. ***Presumptuous sin*** could only be dealt with by cutting the person off from the congregation, Numbers 15:27-31. Numbers 15:32-36 gives an example: in spite of what had been commanded concerning the sabbath (Ex 35:1-3), a man ***presumptuously*** gathered sticks on the sabbath day.

Are we not told the same thing by the author of Hebrews when he gives no sacrifice for wilful sin? *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. [It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (10:26-31.)*

Though the redeemed are assured of their eternal life, there will be some kind of final answering for their presumptuous sin. We can only speculate about what that answering will consist of; we can only accept scriptures for what they say: Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pe 4:5.

Third, ***sin*** here in Lev 4, as it is in 1 John 3:4, is defined as being *against any of the commandments of the Lord*.

Fourth, *against any of them...* In other words, according to James 2:10, if any one commandment is violated, the sinner is guilty of violation all of the commandments and in need of a sacrifice for sin.

Thus, we see from this chapter that every person is accountable to a common standard (God's truth), but the degree of accountability differs greatly and is according to their station in life.

Leviticus 4 gives us the order of responsibility and accountability before God: first, *the priest*, v. 3; then *the whole congregation*, v. 13; then *a ruler* (civil), v. 22, and last, *any one of the common people*, v. 27. As we saw in v. 2, all 4 classes of people are held to the same standard; there is not one standard for one class and another standard for another class.

The **first class of people** before God is *the priest*, the spiritual leader of God's people. He is held above the congregation, the rulers and the common people of the land. But notice he is not listed first because of any special favors from God; rather, he is listed first because he is first in responsibility and accountability before God.

He was responsible to enquire of God and teach the law of God to the people, Lev 10:11. Furthermore, he was the one who was the final court of appeals for judging the people according to the law of God, Deut 17:9; 33:10. Obviously, he was to set the example of righteousness, Deu 33:9. Therefore, as a teacher of the law, he must know the most about the law.

Notice these points about the priest:

First, there is no indication of **ignorance** on the priest's part although there is on the part of the other three classes of people: concerning *the whole congregation*, it says *and the thing be hid...*, v. 13; concerning *a ruler*, *come to his knowledge...*, v. 23, and concerning *any one of the common people*, *come to his knowledge...*, v. 28. But of **the priest**, it only says: *do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin*, v. 3. As the author of Hebrews said, if one knows the truth, yet he goes ahead and acts contrary to the truth, he has only the fiery indignation of the Lord to look forward to. The priest, as teacher of God's truth, was held responsible to know all the truth and act accordingly.

Second, the sin of the priest is listed as *sin according to the sin of the people* rather than *sin against the commandments of the Lord* as it says concerning to the other three classes of people. (Of course, all sin is a violation of God's commandments.) This implies two things: 1) the priest is held to the same standard as are the people only with greater accountability, and 2) the priest allowed the people to lead him astray and away from the command-word of God. (Notice that this is not said about the civil ruler.)

Third, the sin offering for *the priest* and for *the whole congregation* was identical in every point: *a young bullock* (although *without blemish* is not said for the congregation's bullock, we will assume the same unblemished requirement for both). Thus by being listed first, the priest was held more accountable for his sin than was the whole congregation. Furthermore, the *bullock* was the most "expensive" of all the sin offerings mentioned.

Fourth, unlike the other three classes of people, it is not said that the priest's sin were forgiven him, cf. vs. 20, 26, 35 & Hebrews 10:26-31. Thus, the Lord assumes that the teacher knows the law, and He treats the teacher as though he sinned presumptuously (whether he did or not, he is responsible to know the law). And furthermore, the Lord accepts no excuse of ignorance of His word from those responsible to teach His word to His people. See *through ignorance* above.

The **second class** of people listed here is *the whole congregation*. The Geneva notes here that "The multitude excuses not the sin, but if all have sinned, they must all be punished."

First, they *sinned through ignorance*, and *the thing* was hidden from their *eyes*, v. 13. V. 21 concludes the instructions for the congregational sin offering with *as he burned the first bullock*, v. 21. Thus, the two offerings were identical (the introduction for each was quiet different because the offering dealt with different people in different stations of life), cf. v. 3 & v. 13.

The Lord warned His people of national sin in Deut 28:15ff, and 2 Chron 7:14 calls for national repentance (we cannot avoid the fact that each individual is a part of a much larger group and must do their part for the godliness of that group, cf. Lev 5:1, &c.). An couple examples of national sin would be our present departure from Godly law and the abortion holocaust. An example of congregational sin would be their freely entering into debt contrary to the word of God, then when the truth (Pro 22:7; Rom 13:8) is brought to the congregation's attention, they confess and remove themselves from their bondage to man. Or maybe the sin could be

unknowingly submitting the congregation to the will and whim of the state through all kinds of licensure; then when the sin is pointed out, the people repent and take the proper corrective action.

It is interesting that in 2 Samuel 21:1ff, the nation of Israel was judged by God for not keeping the covenant they made with the Gibeonites. Saul was actually the one who "wared" against them, but the nation was judged for allowing Saul to wage that war. Undoubtedly, the covenant made by our fathers (the founders of these United States) has been seriously violated. Will the Lord hold the people of this nation who have allowed the violation any less accountable than He did Israel in 2 Samuel 21?

Second, the congregation's sin was *against any commandment of the Lord*; whereas, the priest's sin was *according to the sin of the people*, v. 14 (cf. Num 15:22-26). Of course, in both cases sin was a violation of the commandments of God.

Third, the sinning priest laid his hand upon the bullock; here the elders as the representatives of the congregation (e.g. modern deacons) laid their hands on the head of the bullock. Thus, they signified that they (the priest, the congregation) deserved for their sin what was about to be done to the bullock. The leader of God's people is held much accountable for his sin than is even the whole congregation.

The **third class** of people, *a ruler*, v. 22. His sin was through ignorance of the commands of God, not intentional, presumption. *Come to his knowledge...* could be something like Nathan pointing out David's sin to him, or Samuel pointing out Saul's sin to him. Notice the sin offering required of *a ruler*:

First, *a kid of the goats*. This offering would not be near as costly as the bullock. Thus, clearly the Lord does not hold the civil ruler near as accountable as He does the teachers of His word; it is the teacher whom has the tremendous responsibility for society before God, not the civil ruler.

Second, *a kid...* Not only was this offering not as expensive, but it did not have to be mature as did the offering for the priest and the congregation. Their offering had to be a mature *bullock*. The teacher must be a mature individual, more mature than even the civil ruler because he has more responsibility and accountability.

Third, *male without blemish*. Note that this is the only thing that set the ruler above the common people: he had to bring *a male without blemish*; whereas, *the common people* had to bring a female without blemish, v. 28.

Thus, we see that in the Lord's eyes, the civil ruler is only one step above the common man, but on the other hand, the man of God is first on His list of responsibility and accountability to God.

The **fourth class** of people: *the common people*. Not only could they bring a female *kid of the goats*, but they could bring a female lamb. Their sin offering was sacrificed in the same manner as was the ruler's.

First, the immaturity (kid, lamb) and gender of the offering is stressed. Thus, we are shown that the people are little more than sheep which will follow their leader, Ps 100.

Second, even though the individual is held to the same standard of accountability (*the commandments of the Lord*) as is his leader, his measure of accountability is not as great.

Notice some further points about these four classes of people: 1) the two last offerings, the ruler and the common people, are also called peace offerings, vs. 31, 35. The two first offerings are not. 2) the congregation, the ruler and the individual member of the congregation had atonement made and *sin forgiven*, vs. 20, 26, 35. Attainment and forgiveness are not mentioned in the priest's offering, v. 12.

Now let us draw four conclusions:

First, this chapter gives us a clear picture of the Lord's classification of people in their order of responsibility and accountability to Himself as revealed in His commandments:

1) the Levitical priesthood is clearly a picture of God's men (teachers) of the NT. Thus, the teachers of God's word are given greater grace for their greater responsibility, Eph 4:7; 1 Pet 4:10. Furthermore, because of their greater place of authority, responsibility and grace, they are held to a much higher standard of accountability

than is the congregation, the civil ruler or *the common people*. The pastor/teacher is required to know the law of God, and if anyone has no excuse before God for ignorance, the pastor has none. Did not Paul warn Timothy to lay hands suddenly on no man, or he would be partaker with that man's sin, 1 Tim 5:22. How many are placed in positions of responsibility for teaching God's word with no knowledge of *the commandments of the Lord* which they are called upon to uphold and teach to the people? Can God's man plead ignorance? Did the Lord overlook ignorance in His OT teachers? Will He today? Is there forgiveness for presumptuous sin? Moreover, can we overemphasize the responsibility and accountability which the Lord's places upon those in spiritual leadership and teaching positions? I think not.

2) then the congregation; 3) then the civil rulers, who are only a "cut" above the common man; 4) then the individuals of society. The listing of the civil authorities next to last in God's classification is extremely significant, and they are listed after the congregation. Therefore, **the teacher is for more responsible to God for the congregation than is the civil authority**. The teacher will be held far more accountable to God for the direction of the people than will be the civil leaders.

Second, the first two, the teacher & the congregation, must face facts or the third and fourth never will; the unfaithful (to God's commandments) priest is the heart of the problem. Thus, any return to a godly society must start with God's men leading the people of the congregation in the way of the Lord. Furthermore, God provides no excuse for these leaders not to lead the people in the path of the commands of the Lord; when they do not, it is considered presumption on their part. Only when the men of God realize and accept their responsibility before God for the people as a whole, will the civil rulers return; the individual is listed last. Thus it is a false hope of the worse kind, presumption, to consider any kind of return to godliness without the "priest" facing the facts of Leviticus 4. In other words, we cannot expect Clinton to do something which the neither the preachers nor the congregations are willing to do: admit the four opening points of this document. If pastors and people will not admit that sodomy, abortion, statism or socialism &c., are serious sins according to the commands of God, Clinton and his cabinet will not either.

Third, note how "teachers" enjoy pointing out the sins of others: congregational, rulers and the common people, but the teacher is the one who should be in fear and trembling that he himself might be found in sin, Philippians 2:12.

Fourth, how can the "Christian Community" complain about civil rulers following the will of the people ("public policy") when the religious leaders do the same? The Lord is raising up civil leaders after the manner of the religious leaders; we cannot expect civil leaders to follow established law (constitution) over the people's will until the religious leaders are willing to follow God's established law (commandments, 1 Jo 3:4) over the will of their people to do what seems best in their own eyes.

[I knew a local pastor who was told by the leaders in his congregation that they did not care what the Bible said about a particular matter, they were determined to continue in what they felt was best. Even though most of us would have considered the pastor a liberal, he had more internal fortitude than the vast majority of "conservative" pastors: he told them that if they would not submit to the word of God, he would leave. He left.]

How can we complain when civil rulers (next to the last in Lev 4) do not know and/or enforce the constitution which they are sworn to uphold, yet do or say nothing about "men of God" (first in this list) who knows and/or says nothing of the commandments which they are sworn to uphold? Why do we hold civil leaders to a higher standard and expect more from them than we do religious leaders? Why will we remain under religious leaders who refuse to follow the clear teachings of the law of God, yet we will almost revolt over civil leaders who will not follow the "law of the land," the Constitution? Why will people strongly reject statist civil rulers, yet accept statist pastors and churches? In order of importance, responsibility and accountability before God, inspired Scripture lists civil authorities next to the bottom and religious leaders at the top.

Scripturally, the battle is not to get civil authority to return to the constitution (such return will not solve the problem in America); rather, the battle is to get religious leaders to return to the final authority of *all scripture*.

Ezekiel 9:6, 7 *Slay utterly old [and] young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom [is] the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which [were] before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.*

Judgement must start in the house of God.

(Added the following verse by verse study.)

Lev 4

This offering covered sins committed through ignorance concerning things which ought to be done, but violated. The rites belonging to each "sinner" are different according to the station of each: priest, congregation, ruler, common person.

V. 2, this law was spoken specifically to the children of Israel and proselytes.

if any soul... Sin is from the soul though committed by the body.

through ignorance... Ignorance of the law that certain things were forbidden or commanded, sins done in secret-unobserved, accidentally, commands forgotten to do, errors, mistakes and ignorance, Heb 5:2. **Refers to sins that overtake a person or catch him unawares, sins that draw the person in through temptation appealing to the corrupt nature.** David referred to them in **Ps 19:12, 13.**

ought not to be done refers to the negative aspect of the commandments: Thou shalt not.

That is, of negligence or ignorance, especially in the ceremonial law: for otherwise the punishment for a crime is determined according to the transgression, Nu 15:22. [Geneva]

shall do against any of them; I must admit, the *ceremonial* law as given to Moses contained a great many "ought nots," which one could do very easily and inadvertently; this sin could involve a violation of one of their many sabbaths.

V. 3, *the priest that is anointed* is mentioned first: the high priest, the sons of Aaron who represented the people to God. He is to set the proper example, and he must be clean before the Lord before he can help others.

The Apostle told us that the law makes clear that the best of men are sinners, even the high priest who stood between God and man. Thus another priesthood was needed, not after the order of Arron, Heb 7:11ff. [v. 28].

according to the sin of the people... Either he sinned after the manner of common man, or he caused the people to error by his ignorant instruction of the people or by his sin.

He was to bring *a young bullock*, not an ox nor calf, but a young bullock of its second year [according to Jewish writers]. The high priest was required to bring the same offering as was required of the whole congregation, vv. 13, 14. He represented the whole before the Lord, and he was looked up to by the whole.

without blemish, of course, was a type of Christ, *unto the Lord* against whom the sin took place. Only the sacrifice of Christ will satisfy the Holy Heavenly Father.

a sin offering-2 Co 5:21 For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

V. 4 has been covered in chapter 1. Basically, the high priest, the sinner, confessed he deserved the same punishment the beast suffered.

This verse clearly speaks of faith in Christ: faith that He suffered in our place.

Vv. 5, 6, the priest had to have the blood applied for his own sins unlike our Great High Priest.

The blood was sprinkled, clearly speaking of the work of Christ for the sinner: Heb 9:13, 14; 12:24, & 1 Pet 1:2.

Seven times speaks of the perfect work of Christ Who both shed His blood and presented it on the heavenly altar

before the Father for the sins of His people.

before the vail is also another clear illusion of the work of Christ: Through the sprinkling of His blood, we have boldness to enter through the vail which is no longer there, Heb 10:19 *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus...* See the rest of the context.

V. 7, clearly speaks of Christ, see **Rev 8:3, 4, & 1 John 2:1, 2.**

The remaining blood had to be poured *at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering*. The blood typified Christ's precious blood, and could not be treated lightly, *e.g.* spilt on the ground.

Vv. 8-10, the bullock was cut up and the parts placed upon the fire as God commanded. See chapter 3.

V. 11, all of this offering was consumed upon the altar. The bullock, unlike the other offerings, was cut up with the skin on him-which belonged to the priests in the other offerings-and wholly burned.

This offering being a sin offering was totally consumed upon the altar except for the blood which had been sprinkled before the vail and poured at the foot of the altar. This offering spoke of the total sufferings and sacrifice of Christ for the sins of His people; therefore, nothing could be spared. Christ was made a curse for His people.

V. 12, anything remaining of this sacrifice, even the ashes, had to be taken outside the camp and burned. Again, this spoke of Christ's sacrifice outside the gate, **Heb 13:11, 12.**

the ashes are poured out openly as Christ was crucified at the place of skulls, or dead men's ashes, John 19:17.

Vv. 13ff. next on the list is whole congregation, and what to do if it sins.

The priests, Levites and/or judges might have-intentionally or unintentionally-mislead the congregation of the Lord contrary to the Word of God, but it is still responsible before God; that is to say, the congregation cannot say, "The teacher misled me." The teacher had to deal with his own sins, vv. 1-12, and the congregation had to deal with its own sins.

This is the Book of Leviticus, a book of the law being given to Moses as the first words from the new tabernacle within just a short time after the people were delivered from Egypt. They would have, therefore, the 5 Books of Moses by the time they arrived into the land of Canaan. Thus the people, the congregation of God is culpable before God for following the law of Moses over the teachings of the Levites, the judgments of the judges or the leadings of the priests.

and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, congregation or church, so that they do not know that it is a sin with they have committed [Gill]. **Transgressed negative precepts**, Gill. They should not have done what they did, *e.g.* went into debt would be a good example. They were guilty of sin whether they knew it or not.

Here we could easily have a reference to "charismatic" leaders who can easily persuade the people of God to overlook the Word of God and follow him. When reality strikes and the truth of the matter is made known, the people are to confess their sins through the elders, and offer the sin offering.

Notice that the elder was not an elected post, but appointed based upon his age, spirituality, ability and willingness to serve. The elders were probably also the judges.

V. 13, The multitude does not excuse the sin, but if all have sinned, they must all be punished. Geneva.

V. 14, *When the sin... is known*. Interestingly, the priest confessed his fault, 1-12, and now the congregation confesses its fault. Though the congregation was led into sin by its leaders, it was still responsible. The confession of the priest brought home the problem for the people, and now they must make it right before God.

Part of the sin would have been following man instead of God, unknown idolatry.

is known; made known to them by the priest, the Levite or by another means they are convinced of the sin.

then..., the same offering is required as was for the priest who sinned.

V. 15, apparently requires a "chief" of each tribe to lay his hand upon the sacrifice, *i.e.* twelve men who represented the entire nation.

Vv. 16-21, covers the same thing as covered concerning the priest, vv. 1-12.

What kind of sin would an entire congregation be involved in?

Some cross-reference:

- 1) Achan's sin was charged to the whole congregation, Josh 7.
- 2) Marriage to "strange wives" was a general sin of the congregation, Ezra 10.
- 3) The *spirit of whordom* is charged to the "nation" of Ephraim, Hos 5:4.
- 4)

V. 22, next, *When a ruler hath sinned...* Referring to a civil ruler, governor, one who bears the weight of government.

of the LORD his God is added for this ruler, which is not used for any of the other three. The Lord God sharply reminds the ruler that he is not God; rather, he is accountable to God.

which should not be done... He is held accountable to the same standard as were the others of his nation: He is accountable to the same God and to the same standard. He may consider himself a "lawmaker," and, hence, above the law, but the Lord clearly holds him to the same standard already established by the Lord.

V. 23, his offering was to be *a kid of the goats*, a fat one, according to Gill, for he ate fat things everyday.

Vv. 24-26, see above.

and the priest..., *and it shall be forgiven....* Clearly, this offering, as did all offerings, spoke of Christ, and forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake. Our Great High priest made atonement, and the sinner is forgiven through his faith in Christ. *[S]hall be forgiven...:* he will not be punished for his sin, for the kid took the punishment as Christ took the sinner's punishment.

Vv. 27-37, the fourth class of people dealt with, the common man: a common priest, Levite, or Israelite. No man is free from sin; all must face the fact; provision must be made rich and poor, bond and free, exalted and abased, it matters not, for all have sinned..

Everything is identical to the offerings given above for the other three except, *a female without blemish*. The common man's offering was inferior to the ones above. His place of authority was not as great; therefore, his accountability was not as great.

The *common* man-male or female-could also bring a lamb, v. 32. Normally, lambs are mentioned before goats, but here it is mentioned after.

This fourth section ends with the same words, *and it shall be forgiven him*. The innocent victim might be different, but still required was the transferal of guilt from the sinner to the sacrifice. The result is the same, *forgiveness of sin*.

The sinner since Christ has the same promise: Through faith in God's sinless sacrifice, each and every sinner can have forgiveness of sin.