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PREFACE

Many commentators on the book of Leviticus have spent their pages disparaging the contents of the book. Their gloomy views have frightened most Bible students away from the book. I am glad that events led me to make a new study of the book for myself, because that study opened my eyes to a book that is full of rich and abiding truths and set me free from the pessimistic approaches of the commentaries.

Some have found Leviticus to be full of false claims concerning its authorship and origin. They have labored long and hard to explain how the Bible can include a book with so many false claims. Largely they have failed to find any real explanations. I have been delighted to find that Leviticus is full of all kinds of evidence that it not only came into being in the miraculous manner it claims but that it is of such a nature that it could not have come into existence in any other way. Now I understand that a book with such a miraculous origin has to belong in the Bible.

Some have found Leviticus to be full of gruesome and repulsive “slaughter-house” rituals. They have labored long to dilute the gore, only to sadly confess their failure. They have found room to rejoice only that they did not have to study the book again. I found instead a book loaded with a glittering array of rich and meaningful symbols, portraying exciting and uplifting experiences with a holy and gracious God. As I completed my research into chapter after chapter, I found myself so exhilarated over the truths revealed that I was left with the feeling that I had just departed from a revival meeting. When I finished the book, I felt that I had lived again with Moses and Israel one of the most breathtaking months in the history of the world, a month that brought more new truth about God into the world than perhaps any other one month in history.

Others have found Leviticus to be full of dull, dry, dead legalisms that portrayed a message of salvation by the works of the law. They have assumed that the book teaches the legalistic falsehoods of the Pharisees, which Jesus denounced to forcefully during His ministry on earth and which Paul rejected so resoundingly in the book of Galatians. They have pondered long over the question of how one God could be at one time the legalistic Jehovah of Leviticus and at another time the gracious Jesus of the gospels, and they have found no answer. I have been delighted to discover that the book not only does not teach the burdensome legalism with which the Pharisees smothered its real message but instead flatly contradicts it. I have remembered that some have done the same to the gracious teachings of Jesus, and I have seen that those who made Leviticus legalistic were as much in error as those who make Christianity legalistic. I have been delighted to learn that the God of Galatians was the God of Leviticus and of Moses and that the messages of Leviticus and Galatians are not two messages but one.

Having received these insights, I have been delighted to experience the breathtaking atmosphere of the book that unashamedly records the miraculous intervention of Almighty God into human history to reveal Himself to men oppressed and enslaved by the powers of this world. I have been as excited to gain an understanding of the ceremonies of the book as Paul was to be freed from the practice of them (Gal. 3:27-4:7; 4:21-5:1; 6:12-16). I have learned to be as grateful for the schoolmaster of the law which led me again to Christ as Paul was to discover the Christ to whom the law helped lead him (Gal. 3:24). To be sure, like Paul, I would count it an abrasive bondage to be forced to return again to the practice of the ceremonies of the Levitical law (Gal. 4:9), but I also know that I never would have fully appreciated the liberty we have in Christ if I had not learned to understand that law through study. With Paul, I rejoice greatly that the practice of the Levitical laws was nailed to the cross Jesus. But I also recognize that the spiritual revelations that those laws revealed are alive and vital today as they were in the days they were first revealed. I confess that the law is good—not was

good, but is good—because it reveals to us truths we need to know about our sinfulness and God’s graciousness. I do believe Christians need to study the book of Leviticus again.

Therefore, I release the following pages in an attempt to share with others what my study of the book has revealed to me. I make them available with a sincere prayer that some of the same thrill and joy that came to me as I studied it may come also to you as you retrace my explorations by reading and studying this volume.

I wish to express deep gratitude to the members of First Baptist Church in Houma, Louisiana, who demonstrated so much patience with me as I wrote the results of my investigations, to the church staff who carried so many responsibilities for me with eager willingness and without complaint, and to my family who lovingly accepted so much neglect during the fourteen months that this volume was in preparation. I owe all of them thanks forever.

Throughout this volume, the names of English versions of the Bible are abbreviated as follows:

AB	The Amplified Bible
ASV	American Standard Version
DB	The Douay Bible
JB	The Jerusalem Bible
KJV	The King James or Authorized Version
LB	The Living Bible, Paraphrased
MV	The Bible, A New Translation by James Moffatt
NAB	The New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	The New English Bible
NWT	New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SGV	An American Translation, translated by Smith, Goodspeed, and others
NIV	New International Version

Leon Hyatt, Jr.
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It has been thirty-four years since I first wrote the words above and thirty-one years since the Lord led me away from First Baptist Church in Houma to other places of service, but my heart remains as much in love with the book of Leviticus as ever. This work was originally written to be part of a commentary series on the whole Bible. That commentary series was never published because the intended publishing company was sold to a new owner, and the new owner chose not to proceed with the publication. This volume has been lying in a box ever since. Today the Internet provides a means of sharing insights with others that did not exist in 1973. With encouragement from others, I have renewed my study of Leviticus and made considerable revisions in what I wrote previously. Doing so is much easier today by using a computer than it was in the days when typewriters were the best method available. Now I release the result for posting on the Internet in the hope that the insights it contains may live on.

In making revisions, I have made frequent reference to one English version of the Bible that was not available in 1973. It is the Holman Christian Standard Bible, which I have abbreviated as HCSB.

In order not to infringe on anyone’s copyright, Scripture references in this volume are my own translations, unless otherwise noted. I have sought to make the translations as literal as possible, because I am

convinced that Jehovah Himself revealed every word of the Bible and that He did so with meticulous care. Many times just one word added, omitted, or changed can affect seriously the meaning of a sentence. Sometimes the words God gave us contain subtle insights that are not discerned even by the translator. As far as it is possible meaningfully to convert word-for-word the words of one language into another, I have sought to bring into English the actual words God spoke to Moses.

I give thanks to my wife, who continues to be patient with the many tasks I have neglected while reworking these materials. I am grateful to Dr. Chuck Quarles, Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, and to Dr. Shepherd, Professor of Christian Studies at Louisiana College, for encouraging me to make these studies available through the Internet. My heart is full of appreciation to my granddaughter, Anna Gilliland, who entered the original version of this work into a computer to make it easier for me to make revisions. Above all, thanks be to God for giving us the marvelous book of Leviticus—and all the other wondrous insights He has revealed in every one of the inspired books of the Bible.

Leon Hyatt, Jr.
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