

The book of the Bible you skip over; Leviticus. #1 of 4, God's 3rd choice - 20210424

Hi all,

If any book is skipped over in our personal reading, it is Leviticus, literally 'About the Levites'. And on the surface with good reason; it is full of details of a culture and system to which we cannot relate or understand. It's boring, and so detailed that after we read a chapter we don't even know what we read.

Yet it is anything but boring if we know what to look for, including the fact the Levites were not God's 1st choice. That is good for those who wonder what the Father thinks of them, or feel they have let Him down by life choices. It is an example of the Lord's big picture perspective on our lives, His ability to adjust, and His grace.

The Levites - not God's original choice

In Exodus 19 Israel arrives at the foot of Mount Sinai, 47 days out of Egypt. For 3 more days they fast and prepare themselves to hear directly from the Lord. On the 50th day, which was the original Day of Pentecost, God speaks to them. Verse 6 says He wants to make the whole nation "a kingdom of priests". The whole nation of priests!

They weren't sure what that was about, and in 20:18-21 when they saw the lightning and heard the thunder from God's presence on the mountain, they rejected their whole-nation priesthood: (To Moses) "You speak with Him, don't let us speak with Him or we will die." They rejected their whole-nation priesthood right then and there.

The Lord is flexible, for them, and for us

With their rejection of His call on their lives, He adjusted. He stated He had legal claim to the first born through the blood of the lamb shed on Passover, but found resistance with that too. So He provided a way for parents to buy back their firstborn from the Lord if those chose, using a sliding scale offering based on their income.

You may recall Mary and Joseph gave the minimum offering of 2 pigeons/doves to buy back their firstborn, Jesus, from the Father. That is in Luke 2:22-24. I hope no one misses the humility of the Father and beauty in that irony: The Father so loved the world He gave His only Son to mankind, who was a firstborn. Then He allowed Joseph and Mary to 'buy back' their son so that He could become the Son who would 'go into ministry anyway', and to the cross.

You may also recall in I Samuel 1:11 that Hannah promised God through her tears to give her firstborn to the Lord to be raised as a priest, if only she and her husband could conceive. In other words, she vowed not to use the 'escape clause' and let the Lord have her firstborn.

Eli the priest assured her the Lord heard her prayer, and the boy Samuel was the result. When he was weaned she kept her word and obeyed the Law of the firstborn, giving him to ministry in the temple. He became the last Judge of Israel, a Seer and prophet to Kings Saul and David.

Enter Aaron and Moses' family: The Levites

Israel had rejected being a nation of priests, and they didn't like being forced to give their firstborn to the Lord. So the Lord provided yet another alternative:

In Numbers 3:12-13 God says this: "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of the firstborn that opens the womb; therefore the Levites will be mine. However, the firstborns still belong to me for on that day I struck Egypt I set aside all the firstborn in Israel...Mine they will be, for I AM."

This was how they transferred responsibility for the priesthood from the whole nation onto the Levites:

"You will bring the Levites before the Lord in front of the tabernacle, and you will gather the whole nation of Israel together with them. You will bring the Levites directly in front of the tabernacle, and the children of Israel will lay their hands on the Levites for the work of the Lord. And Aaron will offer the Levites to the Lord on behalf of Israel for service to the Lord, that they may execute the service of the Lord." Numbers 8:9-11

And that is how the Levites ended up being in the ministry. God's 3rd choice.

If you are your own worst enemy....

Church culture can make a person feel that if they 'missed it' then it is all over, maybe they've even lost their salvation. Many feel like God called them to this or that in years prior, but then life happened when they were busy doing other things. Now looking back over their life they feel they've let God down, and wonder how He feels about them. Here we see a whole nation rejecting the call of God on their lives, and what did the Father do? He adjusted.

Part of the answer is that you and I are already in eternity, so nothing in Him is lost. You don't die and then enter eternity. You are now alive forever. Forever. We are in eternity right now. His Word doesn't return void, so that means you may fulfill your call in the Millennial age, perhaps 50, 200, 500, 7,000 years from now or more - you're already living in 'forever', so there is time to enter into what was missed in this life.

His Word WILL happen in you life

I've shared many times about the couple in our church years ago who had great prophecies spoken over them, but things went poorly and they ended up divorced. In a visitation I asked the Lord about that couple. His answer stunned me:

"They will fulfill their call the age to come. When I asked for chapter and verse, He said: "There are many prophecies given in the Old Testament which jump over this time of the Gentiles to speak of the Millennial age to come. So why is it hard for you to believe a Word given to someone in this age can't come to pass in the next?" So I take the big picture approach to my life, He does too: "So that in the ages to come (the Father) will continue to show the riches of His kindness which is towards us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7)

God's flexibility to Israel:

"The whole nation will be a kingdom of priests to Me!"

"Uh...no. You talk to Moses and then he can talk to us and tell us what you are saying."

"Then I will make the firstborn my priests!"

"Uh...no, our firstborns are too important to us to be forced to give them to you, give us a buy back program."

"Then I will take the Levites to be my priests!"

"Uh...ok."

LOL but that is the essence of what happened. He isn't an ogre in the sky, inflexible and insensitive to us. He's our Father, He is God, and we are His family.

The Father still got His way about having a kingdom of priests

You can't out-smart the Lord for He sees the end from before the beginning. The Revelation 1:10, 5:6, and 20:6 say that the Father has made us, that is you and I, "a kingdom of priests". In fact 20:6 says we will be that kingdom of priests in the millennial age, ruling over the earth with Him, and serving as His priesthood.

In I Peter 2:9 he says: "You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, specially set aside for the Lord who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

That means no matter how you have 'missed it' on this earth as a believer, you're still part of the nation of priests in Christ. Your destiny will be fulfilled for we have now been made a kingdom of priests to the Lord. You can't make more mistakes than He has grace and provision. Amazing grace, more from Leviticus next week! Blessings,

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Leviticus, the book you skip, #2 of 4, Fire started by God - 20210501

Hi all,

Today; supernatural Israel.

God started the fire

What makes ancient Judaism so supernatural is that God started the fire for the burnt offering, not man.

Man cannot come to God on any of his own efforts or formulas. In the Old Testament when a person was in the presence of God they had to remove their shoes because shoes are man-made. We can't come into His presence on anything we did. This is found in Exodus 3:5-6 when Moses talks to the Lord at the burning bush. "...Remove your shoes from your feet, for this is holy ground."

Also seen in Joshua 5:14-15 when Christ as the Captain of the Lord's armies told Joshua how to take Jericho and commands him to remove his shoes in His presence. (This was not an angel talking to Joshua, but Christ, noted by the fact 1, He received worship, 2, told Joshua to remove his shoes, and 3, in chapter 6 the narration continues by switching from natural view to the real perspective; 'the Lord said...' in their conversation. So toss out books that say this is an angel (Like Angels on Assignment) for there are a few out there which bring error to one's understanding.)

Man can't come to God through any effort of his own. It is the reason God commanded when they built an altar on which to make sacrifices, they could not chisel the rock or change it in any way - they had to use the rock as they found it on the ground, for to shape it would be to add man's effort to salvation. Exodus 20:25

Fire from the Lord

With that understanding, that coming to God is all Him and we bring nothing to the union, we look at the burnt offering which is the subject of the first chapters of Leviticus. The very first sacrifice we see is when the Lord God (Christ) killed an animal and made coats of skins for Adam and Eve, Genesis 3:21. This was an object lesson for them on how He would later become the final sacrifice that man may be clothed by Him. Genesis 4 records Cain rejected salvation by this grace and chose to come to God on his own efforts, from an offering of the vegetables he had worked so hard to produce. We can't come to God based on our work, our efforts, our formulas.

The Lord did not accept his offering because it was from his own efforts, while He did accept Abel's offering which was the innocent blood of an offering from the flock. This is why Cain is the father of all false religions and false efforts to come to God of one's own efforts. We can use as an example various religious rites from around the world which prescribe certain prayers, certain efforts to approach, impress, or move God.

Moses wrote Genesis, so it is understood by him and to us, that fire came from heaven to consume Abel's offering, and not Cain's. That is how he knew his offering had not been accepted. This established the pattern of God being the one who sent fire from heaven to start the fire of the burnt offering, that nothing of that offering remain.

This is repeated throughout Leviticus - let nothing of the burnt offering remain. It must be totally consumed. This is what the Lord told Israel on that first Passover in Exodus 12:10: "Let nothing of it remain until morning, and if some remains in the morning, burn it completely." This is of course a type of Jesus on the cross, that His 'burnt offering' for sin was complete, total, 100%.

Moses and Aaron - Leviticus 9:23-24 at the very first offerings from the new priesthood led by Aaron: "And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle and then came out and blessed the people. And the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. And there came fire out from before the Lord and consumed on the altar the sacrifice and even to the fat, and the people saw it and shouted and fell on their faces."

Gideon - In Judges 6:20-24, Gideon sees the angel of the Lord (Christ), who calls him to lead Israel against the Midianites and become the Judge of Israel. Gideon makes an offering of meat and unleavened bread and put it on a rock altar. The 'angel of the Lord' touched the rock with His staff and a fire started that consumed the offering and the 'angel of the Lord' departed. Gideon didn't start the fire, the 'angel of the Lord' did. Gideon, knowing his history and realizing he had seen the Lord face to

face, cried out. The Lord then spoke to him and assured him that he would not die. Gideon called the Lord 'Jehovah Shalom', God of Peace, because of this encounter that he did not die.

Samson - About 50 years later, in Judges 13:16-20 the 'angel of the Lord' appears to a man named Manoah and his wife, telling them she will conceive and give birth to a Judge for Israel and he will be a Nazarite from conception. These parents of the future Samson make an offering to the Lord in thanks for this prophecy, and Manoah, not realizing Who he was talking to, asked Him His name.

Verse 18: "Why do you ask my name seeing it is Wonderful?" (Heb: Wonderful, incomprehensible, majestic), and then He ascended in the flame of the sacrifice to heaven and out of view. You'll recall Isaiah 9:6 says of Messiah: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful..."

Manoah told his wife they had seen God face to face and will surely die. His wife, being smarter and with common sense, said in v23; "Would He have told us we are going to have a son if He was going to kill us? And He accepted our offering as well, so we aren't going to die."

Solomon - In II Chronicles 7:1-3 when Solomon dedicated his temple it says: "When Solomon had ended his speech the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the temple because the glory of the Lord had filled the place so strongly. And when all the people saw how the fire came down with the glory of the Lord they fell on their faces and worshipped, praising the Lord saying, 'For He is good; for his mercy endures forever.'"

Elijah - In I Kings 18:36-39 we have perhaps the most well known example of God's pattern of starting the fire for the burnt sacrifices - Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Unfortunately most pastors and Sunday school lessons neglect teaching the larger truth, thinking what Elijah did was an exception to the rule. As a result we may wonder why Elijah was so confident his plan would work, and many have mistakenly thought he just came up with the idea himself, or his great faith caused God to answer by fire. Faith is not independent of God, but rather our response to His revealed grace. Elijah was just following His Word from Leviticus, which had not been followed in Israel in years.

Elijah knew all this, which is why he was biding his time until the standard 3pm evening sacrifice, when he knew God would answer by fire to consume the burnt sacrifice. So he had fun with the prophets of Baal, accusing Baal of being on the toilet in once instance, away on a trip at another time. And as 3pm approached he confidently told the people to pour water on the sacrifice because he wanted to show them he was not going to do some magic trick, no sleight of hand to start the fire by trickery.

"And it came to pass at the time of the evening sacrifice Elijah the prophet drew near and said; 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and I have done all these things at your Word. (Instructions in Leviticus)'...Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and the water in the trench..."

From Abel to Moses, Gideon to Manoah, Solomon to Elijah, God's pattern was that fire from heaven would consume the burnt offering completely. It is a type of Jesus on the cross, fully taking away the sin of the world.

Christian - For the Christian struggling with their salvation, wondering if God might yet reject them though they believe in Jesus and love God, what we see established in Leviticus and the other passages gives us great peace. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, a transaction between Him and His Father, was a complete work. There is nothing left of our sin. As Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:17: "...old things are passed away, and behold! All things have become new."

There is not a 'Yes, but' to be expressed. There is no 'You don't know what I did' to be considered. The burnt offering was not just for the initial sin, but the whole of sin. Knowing that legally speaking our sin tomorrow or next month or next year has already been burned up in the sacrifice of Jesus, leads us on to greater holiness.

Knowing that our sin and sins yet future are burnt up in the sacrifice of Jesus, invites us to charge forward in every effort to know Him more and better and to draw close for there is nothing between us and God the Father. That knowledge erases fear between us and God - anything that once stood between us, even future sins yet to be committed by us, have already been provided for and forgiven - so move forward full speed ahead in Him!

More next week, until then, blessings,
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The book you skip over, Leviticus, #3 of 4, What atonement really means - 20210508

Hi all,
Have you ever heard the question: 'Is healing in the atonement?' Or maybe, 'Do you believe every sin is covered in the atonement?' (Often asked because the person asking is struggling with something they have done)

We use the word 'atonement' not really understanding it from the perspective of Leviticus, which is a type of life in Christ.

The atonement

The word 'atonement' in Hebrew means to cover something, in ancient usage to cover wood with pitch - like a paint layer, like a waterproofing layer of tar over wood. But it is more than that, for the word carries the significance of meaning the two parts become one by the covering over of the pitch; the first covered by the other making them one.

The covering causes everything to stop, rest, be at peace, for it is the final act in that woodworking project. Once it was covered, the craftsman was done. There can be no further wood working once it is covered over. There is nothing more to do at all, the two have become one.

For that reason it is atonement, translated as '**at-one-ment**'.

Consider those 3 parts: "At-one-ment". Atonement. It is the act of being 'at one' with Christ. It is the moment of becoming at-one. His covering has made us one with Him, and He with us. He is stuck to us and we to Him like pitch sticks to wood, and wood to pitch, becoming one unit.

"At-one-ment (At one moment or 'at that one moment') means all the questions that start with: "Do you think ____ is covered in the atonement", obsolete. The burnt offering and other offerings of Leviticus relate to and are all about making at-one-ment for Israel. EVERYTHING is covered. When a person offered a burnt offering for their atonement, they became at-one-at that moment; with God.

Being covered by God means there is wholeness in His presence. Not just healing, but wholeness. Not just physical and emotional and mental healing, but wholeness. Oneness. Completeness. Rest. No more to do for nothing can be done. Not just prosperity. Not just peace. We have experienced 'at-one-ment' with God.

In Christ

I've mentioned before that in the New Testament there are over 120 terms like 'in Him' and 'He (Christ) in us' describing us being one with the Lord through the blood of the cross. The offerings of Leviticus which atoned for Israel's sins were pictures off Jesus' cross to come. The burnt offerings were completely burned so that nothing was left of the sin. That made the worshipper experience an 'at-one-moment' with God. They became one because no sin stood between them and God any longer. And it was all God's doing.

That is the thoroughness of the work of the Lord. The accuser of the brethren would like us to forget that fact and brings up our memories - but the sin of those actions was long ago covered, sealed over, burned up completely so that nothing is left! We are truly "at-one" in a moment of time, with the Lord. At-one-ment.

Memories are left that we might learn from them and know from which we've been saved, or if done while in Christ, that we may know His continued grace and forgiveness and learn our lesson. But spiritually those sins no longer exist, thus Satan begins a mind-game with us. We must put those thoughts of accusation and condemnation away, bringing thoughts and feelings captive to Christ, for we have experienced at-one-ment with God. The burnt offerings are a type of the completeness accomplished by Jesus on the cross, and at-one-ment is the result. At one.

Running from God

The nature of sin causes man to move away from God; to do anything he can to avoid God. When Adam and Eve sinned they hid themselves from the Lord. When God spoke from the Mount Israel backed away from it, which led to them rejecting their whole-nation priesthood. In The Revelation 6:15-16 the unsaved try to hide themselves from the Lord in caves and crevices.

Sinners run from God sometimes because they know they are sinners, sometimes intuitively they avoid Him without knowing why. John 3:19-21 tells us that light came into the world but men love the darkness lest their lives be exposed. But those who love righteousness want the light.

When the Lord made the tabernacle He stopped talking to Israel from the Mountain, moving to the tabernacle, choosing to speak from the Mercy Seat in the depths of the Tabernacle. The move from mountain top to Tabernacle is found in Exodus 33:7-11 which says in part:

"...And as Moses entered the Tabernacle the cloudy pillar descended (from the mountain) and stood at the door of the Tabernacle. And the Lord talked to Moses...face to face as a man speaks to his friend..."

God created a system using the priesthood and system of sacrifices by which man, who was so afraid of the pure and almighty God, could be reconciled, and even approach God and know Him. He made a way that man and God could experience at-one-ment. God moved off the mountain into a tabernacle/temple, and then eventually from the building into human beings who would have Him. "Do you not know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (I Corinthians 6:19)

Rest

Jesus is our rest. Having Him in our lives causes us to experience by the Holy Spirit, at-one-ment with God. Unlike the Old Testament people who experienced at-one-ment in a way that had to be continually renewed with each sin and sacrifice, Christ now lives in our recreated spirit 24/7, having removed the barrier of sin in His burnt offering, giving us true at-one-ment for eternity with Him and our Heavenly Father by His Spirit. Amazing grace!

We'll close out the series next week, until then, blessings!

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The book you skip over, Leviticus #4 of 4, sin & escape goat, assurance and peace - 20210515

Hi all,

I shared last week about atonement, at-one-ment. Today why there was a goat of the sin offering while at the same time an escape goat was sent into the wilderness.

But first allow me to say this: There are many more things to glean from Leviticus than I'm sharing in this series. For instance, how the division of clean and unclean animals was more than for their health, but a picture that they, Israel, were clean and special to the Lord, uniquely set aside for Him, above all the other nations of the earth.

This is confirmed by Peter's vision of Acts 10:9-16 in which he sees clean and unclean animals on a giant sheet and was told 3x to kill and eat. Peter rejects that command saying he has never eaten anything unclean. The Lord then tells him the vision is not a dietary lesson, but showing him God has cleansed 'clean and unclean' people alike. He was told not call unclean what God has cleansed. While

still thinking on it representatives from the Roman Centurion Cornelius were at the door. "Go with them nothing doubting, for I have sent them", he was told.

We could talk of the regulations of how salt was required on the meat of a burnt offering. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13 we are the salt of the earth, and every Jewish person listening would have understood He was talking about seasoning in life, sacrifice to God is a life seasoned with salt, that the earth can't 'go bad' or 'spoil' as long as we are in it and remain 'salty' to our world, and more.

They would have linked Numbers 18:19 record of a covenant of salt, and David referred to in this way in II Chronicles 13:5. Salt being preservative, flavor enhancer, and stands for community and family around the table of God with a view to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where we are all gathered together as one big family.

There are many things that could be mentioned. How the priests were given the skins of the animals sacrificed in the burnt offering to wear as their covering (Leviticus 7:8). This covering for them provided by the offering for sin is a type of Adam and Eve covered by the Lord's sacrifice of an animal and clothed with their 'glory', skins, and how we are now covered with the Lord's glory, which came through His own 'burnt offering'.

But none is more moving than what is in the middle of Leviticus: The offerings for the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 16:7 says Aaron shall bring two goats before the Lord and draw lots for them; One will be the goat of the sin offering, and the other will be the escape goat or 'live goat'. These two goats are a type of the dual nature of Messiah, for the blood of one will be sprinkled in the holy of holies before God Himself, and the escape goat will be led into the wilderness to die out of sight at the hand of God.

A lamb is not used here to make a point of how Jesus 'became sin for us': A goat is a type of sin, as when Jesus said in Matthew 25:32-33 that at His return He will separate the sheep nations from the goat nations.

In verse 12 the Lord tells Moses to instruct Aaron that before the two goats are offered to God, Aaron had to take burning incense 'that has been beaten small' into the holy place so the smoke covered the Ark of the Covenant and filled the holy place "that he die not".

The incense is a type of the prayers of the saints as seen in The Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4, and in the larger sense here, is the intercession of Messiah for mankind, His offering, His coming before the Father in the Holy Place.

It is for this reason the incense was 'beaten small' or beaten into tiny pieces, which shows the torture Jesus endured in His offering for mankind 'that we not die' in the presence of God. Isaiah 52:14 says: "Many will be astonished at Him, for His appearance was marred more than any man." Being beaten into tiny pieces meant every bit of incense would be consumed by the fire, showing the complete work of Jesus on the cross.

The goat of the sin offering

In Leviticus 16:16-20 the Lord tells Moses the blood of the goat is sprinkled in the holy place to make at-one-ment for Israel, calling it in v20 'making reconciliation'. It was that moment they were one, no more sin between them and God, for He had reconciled them to Himself, making at-one-ment or united God and man 'at one that moment'.

This answers to II Corinthians 5:17-21 where Paul writes: "That is to say, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not charging their sins to them, and given to us the service of reconciliation. We then as Ambassadors for God beg you, be reconciled to God..."

It is also seen in Hebrews 9:22-26 where it says on the earth the temple was purified by earthly sacrifices, but heaven had to be purified by a higher and better sacrifice: "For Christ did not enter a temple made with hands to offer Himself, which is just a type of the True, but He went into heaven itself to appear before God..."

Jesus was in the midst of ascending to present Himself to the Father when Mary saw Him just after His resurrection. Ephesians 4:8 tells us He was leading Captivity to heaven (those in Captivity, also known as Paradise or Abraham's bosom, ie the righteous who had died but were awaiting their sins to be paid)

In John 20:16-19 Mary turns in awe when she hears Him speak her name: "Mary". He tells her, "Don't touch me for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go and tell my disciples I ascend to my Father and their Father, and to my God and your God." The text goes on to say, "Later that same day at evening...Jesus stood in their midst..." He was fulfilling the role of the goat of the sin offering in the Holy of Holies, then once done, He came later that day to appear to the others, and did so more often over the next 40 days. How kind of Him to assure Mary He was alive.

The Scapegoat

We just saw Jesus as the goat of the sin offering which was offered in the holy place, now let's also see His work as the scapegoat, dying in the wilderness at the hand of God. Leviticus 16:21 tells us Aaron was to lay hands on the goat's head and confess the sins of Israel before sending it away into the wilderness to die alone. Verse 22: "And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities in a land not inhabited..." The desolation, the loneliness, is not missed a point we should miss.

This explains why Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!" Notice for the first time Jesus did not use the word 'Father', but He spoke as the unsaved do, the general term 'God'. The sun darkened for the last 3 hours He hung on the cross, alone, suspended between heaven and earth, the scapegoat dying in the wilderness in a private action between God His Father and Himself.

Together, the goat of the sin offering and the scapegoat, reveal the dual nature of Messiah and how His sacrifice cleansed us and made the way for us to enter heaven. If He had not entered heaven to appear before the Father for us, to be declared the legal and final and perfect sacrifice for mankind, our salvation would not have been complete.

Hebrews 6:20 calls Him the forerunner who has entered behind the veil for us, that we may follow. The term 'forerunner' was used to describe a ship coming into port. A man with a rope around him would dive into the water and swim in the path the ship should go, in appearance towing the ship as he swam though it was maneuvered by oarsmen. Jesus is our forerunner this verse says, having 'swum ahead' to see us safely into port.

The scapegoat and the goat of the sin offering are combined in the person of the Lord Jesus. He cleansed us and was declared to be the final sacrifice by the Father God Almighty. That is why Paul would write that we go directly to heaven when we die, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" in II Corinthians 5:6 - Jesus made the way and is awaiting us there, the forerunner having prepared a place for us.

This concludes our study of Leviticus, though there is so much more. But I hope it has been a blessing, new subject next week, until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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