



"The more purely God's word is preached, the more deeply it pierces and the more kindly it works."

—William Gouge

**23-Apr-21**

## **Pentecost's Two Leavened Loaves (Part One)**

In the preface to his book, *The Law of the Offerings*, Andrew Jukes refers to the Bible's sacrifices as "the inspired [parables](#) of the [Old Testament](#)." His is an apt observation, for [God](#) ordained the sacrifices to be lessons, ones that Israel's priests acted out rather than spoke.

Christianity generally understands that the sacrifices point to [Jesus Christ](#) in some way, whether in His work or the critical need for it. He is the object of the whole sacrificial system added to the Abrahamic covenant because of transgressions. That is, He is the goal or the finish line of what God gave to Israel, its perfect product ([Galatians 3:19](#); [Romans 10:4](#); see [Jeremiah 7:22-23](#)). Paul likened the covenant with Israel to a schoolmaster or tutor to bring people to Christ ([Galatians 3:24](#)). He told Timothy that the Holy Scriptures—which, at that point, consisted of what we call the Old Testament—could make him "wise for salvation through [faith](#) which is in Christ Jesus" ([II Timothy 3:15](#)).

Sadly, many people latch onto the "faith in Christ Jesus" aspect and turn a blind eye to the portions of God-breathed Scripture that contain instructions for sacrifices. After all, it is easier to skip over the seemingly multitudinous,

tedious details, generally knowing that, somehow, Jesus fulfilled all those things. But if we read only the end of a book, we miss the critical points that comprise its substance—and neither can we really understand what happens at the conclusion. Likewise, if we neglect the Old Testament, we will not grasp what happens in the New, and therefore, we will not truly understand Jesus Christ's multifaceted work.

The unique offering on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) readily serves as a parable that teaches about the Messiah, as we will see:

And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the [Sabbath](#), from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new [grain offering](#) to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings [two wave loaves](#) of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the [firstfruits](#) to the LORD. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a [sin offering](#), and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a [peace offering](#). The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God. ([Leviticus 23: 15-22](#))

The two loaves baked with leaven form the centerpiece of this offering. For those with any familiarity with the Bible, the loaves pose a serious question

because Scripture universally uses leaven as a symbol of corruption—yet here it appears in a holy day offering. This living lesson introduces a tension, something that we must resolve to understand the offering.

The mystery deepens when we realize that there is not one leavened loaf but two. Why two? For some of the New Testament parables, Jesus gives the interpretation to His disciples, such as, "the field is [the world](#)" or "the tares are the sons of the wicked one" ([Matthew 13:38](#)). But God gives no such clear explanation in this Old Testament "parable." So, we must first consider the biblical usage of the number two.

In short, whereas the cardinal number one indicates sovereignty and that there is *no* other, the number two contrarily signifies that there *is* another. It suggests that a difference exists, which is the fundamental idea behind the number two: When there are two things, difference becomes a significant factor.

The difference can vary in its nature. For example, two people may have different personalities but a shared testimony, like Paul and [Barnabas](#), or friendship, like David and Jonathan. The two are different but not opposed. Another example appears in the ritual for cleansing leprosy in Leviticus 14, which consists of two clean birds. The birds have different roles within the ritual but a common ceremonial purpose. There is no opposition.

However, in many usages, the number two progresses beyond simple difference and into division, opposition, or hostility. Think of God and [Satan](#), Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, or two nations and the armies thereof. Often when there are two, one (if not both) wants to be the only one, to be sovereign, and because they are not one, strife follows.

The priest bakes the two wave loaves with leaven (corruption), which symbolically suggests that the difference between the two may not be benign. Differences with carnality tend to produce division, if not enmity. This picture really is a puzzle because the priest presents two different, leavened objects to the holy God. These symbols pose the question of *how* God could accept an offering of loaves characterized by carnality.

We will dig deeper into this mystery in Part Two.

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Leavening: The Types](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The holy days are reliable, effective, multifaceted teaching tools, emphasizing spaced repetition to reinforce our faulty memories and drive the lesson deep into our thinking. The most effective learning involves drills or exercises, inscribing the lessons on our mind (Deuteronomy 16:3). Memory is enhanced as we continually rehearse a concept until it becomes deeply burned into our character, giving us self-mastery, integrity, and godliness. Like physical leavening, sin has the tendency to puff up and spread, taking effect immediately and irreversibly. We can only be free if we put out sin - false doctrine (I Corinthians 5:6-8) - and eat unleavened bread - or ingest wholesome undefiled teaching and practice righteousness (Titus 2:14).

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The Offerings of Leviticus \(Part Three\): The Meal Offering](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The meal offering represents another aspect of the perfect offering of Jesus Christ. John Ritenbaugh shows that it symbolizes the perfect fulfillment of the second great commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

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