

## **The Offerings Of Leviticus (Part Two): The Burnt Offering**

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As hard as we might find studying the Bible to be, it must be done if we truly desire to know God, and doing so will create a more complete and personal vision of things we must accomplish. Studying is a discipline that requires a great deal of commitment. Commitment is much like a motor that holds a person steadily on course as they pursue their goals. It will cause people to find a way—or make a way—to break from their normal patterns and to change habits that dominate their lives and keep them from success. To have commitment, however, one must have at least the seed or spark of vision to get started.

With commitment, the vision will sharpen and grow—but not without sacrifice. The pursuit of a goal often requires some hindering activities to be put aside or even given up until one achieves the objective. The first article of this series introduced the sacrifices of Leviticus and their relationship to the salvation process. Sacrifice is what we will face if we attempt to overcome the normal patterns of human nature in the spiritual battle.

Human nature is a formidable obstacle because fighting it goes against our ingrained desire for self-satisfaction; the very thought of sacrifice makes our human nature very uncomfortable. It disturbs our feeling of security in what we have become. We are creatures of habit, which is not all bad as long as our habits conform to God and His purpose. Sacrifice, though, confronts us with the reality that we will have to break the mold and oppose what we have grown to love. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:29, "No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it." To attain our vision of God's purpose, we must face the prospect of sacrificing and do it.

### **Sacrificing Is a Way of Life**

The sacrificial offerings of Leviticus are not insignificant, primitive, or barbaric. God carefully devised them as teaching tools to those under the Old Covenant, who looked forward to the full revelation of the object of His law, and to those of us under the New Covenant, who look back on it.

From the beginning, God's intention was that they be teaching vehicles. They are shadows—and the present tense is used purposely. They are still teaching vehicles. For a shadow to exist, there must be a reality. The reality is the life and death of Jesus Christ, and we are to strive to follow this Reality as closely as we can, as dear children, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:1-2, becoming, like Christ, a sweet savor to God. The sacrifices of Leviticus mirror His life and death. Even though we do not have to perform them physically, we can glean a wealth of valuable information from them about the manner in which He lived and why He had to die. In doing this, we learn to walk in His steps.

Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." He makes a parallel comment in I Corinthians 15:31, "I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." The apostle depicts a parallel between Christ's course and ours. Christ's sacrifice was substitutionary. Thus, when He was crucified, and we then accept His death for the forgiveness of our sins, it is as though we were crucified and our sins paid for in full.

However, the parallel does not end there. Sacrifice was a way of life with Jesus Christ, and it is to become our way of life. Every time we obey God's instruction as part of His purpose rather than unresistingly following the dictates of human nature, we are sacrificing ourselves to God and His purpose as a living sacrifice. Every time we sacrifice our time and energy to serve rather than merely pursue our own interests, we are following the patterns shown in the sacrifices of Leviticus and Jesus Christ's life. We are to strive to live just as He lived, and thus the daily sacrifice continues.

The reason for this is to help us to grow up into Him:

. . . till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. . . (Ephesians 4:13-15)

From this point, we will be primarily researching into the burnt offering, meal offering, and peace offering. In them, instead of seeing Christ as redeeming us from sin through the sacrifice of His life as the payment for our sins, we see Him in His work in our behalf as those already redeemed. It is not His sacrificial help in bringing us out of spiritual Egypt but rather His showing us how to live so we avoid falling into that condemnation again and remain in happy fellowship with God. The attitudes and conduct shown in these three offerings prepared Him to be our Redeemer, and if we imitate them in our lives, they will help prepare us for God's Kingdom.

Even though Christ is the sum total of the offerings, we cannot allow ourselves to be separated from them because they are instruction to us. Systematically, we will see Christ in the sacrifices as the offering, the offerer, and the priest. We cannot conform to every type simply because they do not all apply to us, but we must conform to those that do. Most that apply to us fall in the categories of being the offering and the offerer and much less in being the priest.

Each of the five offerings has similarities and differences. The most common similarities are that in each offering there is an offering, an offerer, and a priest. We see Christ as offerer in His role as a human being, the One who became a man. We see Him as offering in His character and work as the victim. We see Him as priest in His relationship to us today; He is our High Priest.

Each distinction also has meaning. For example, each of the four gospel accounts has many similarities while telling essentially the same story, but they are also distinctly different. Matthew emphasizes Christ as the long-expected Messiah, King of the Kingdom of God, and Deliverer. Mark focuses on Jesus as a man, the tireless worker always serving others. Luke highlights the Son of Man suffering (as in Gethsemane) and needing help. John sees Him as God, a powerful man who performs signs and shows no need for sympathy or help.

The picture should be clear. The gospels give us one story with a variety of themes, a story of one Personality and message told from differing perspectives and angles. Its cumulative effect gives us a much more complete picture. A similar design occurs in the offerings, providing multiple applications.

## **Complete Devotion to God**

Leviticus 1:1-4 says:

Now the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.'"

This is commonly called the burnt offering, but sometimes the whole burnt offering. The reason "whole" is added is because other offerings are burned on the altar but not the whole animal. *This offering represents Christ, or in parallel, us, being completely, wholeheartedly devoted to God.*

Psalms 40:6-8 prophesies how Christ would live His life in complete devotion and holiness:

Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the Book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."

John 8:29 confirms from Christ's own mouth that He lived up to this prophecy: "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." His utter devotion to God produced a life of complete holiness. In addition, it also produced something that we ought to value very highly: a supreme confidence, a solid, ever-present assurance of the Father's constant presence and approval as we go through life. How valuable is that in this uncertain and insecure world?

The burnt offering has four distinctive aspects to it:

1. It is a sweet savor to God. He enjoys this offering. It is not given because of sin but because of devotion.
2. It is offered for acceptance in the stead of the offerer. The animal represents the offerer.
3. A life is given.
4. It is completely burned up.

### **A Sweet Savor**

Ephesians 5:1-2 allows us to examine briefly the mention of a "sweet savor" or "sweet-smelling aroma" in a New Testament setting: "Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." Living a life activated by loving-kindness in the keeping of God's commandments, following the example of Jesus Christ, and being tenderhearted to forgive is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

Three of the offerings were sweet smelling, and two were not. The sweet-savor offerings were burned on the brazen altar, while the others were burned outside the camp. No sin is seen in the sweet-savor offerings; the individual Israelite gave them completely voluntarily and not because of guilt. They are simply sweet-smelling offerings. Christ does not appear in them as our sin bearer, but, even more, He is shown offering something so pleasing—so satisfying—it is sweet to God. It symbolizes the way He lived His life. Jesus Christ was a living sacrifice long before He became the sacrifice for sin by crucifixion. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" in service, living a sinless life (John 15:13).

Malachi 1:7, 12 explains the symbolism of the sacrifice and the altar: "You offer defiled food on My altar. But you say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the Lord is contemptible.' . . . But you profane it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.'" The imagery of the sweet-smelling offering centers on food. The altar stands for God's table. Whatever is put upon the altar to be burned as an offering is considered God's food. How good food smells as it is cooking! And how pleasurable it is to eat if it is good food! As such, it is symbolically something that pleases God's taste. If the food is inferior or blemished, as described in these verses, God is greatly displeased, as it shows contempt for Him.

Compare this with Romans 12:1-2, a New Testament account of the type of sacrifice that pleases God:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Sacrificial living in submission to God's will pleases Him. In this case, God is interested neither in Christ's death nor ours but how we live life. Worship is our response to God, and real worship is the offering of our everyday life to Him. Loyal devotion given to please God in every labor of life is the most satisfying and acceptable response we can give God. Peter concurs with Paul, writing in I Peter 2:4-5, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

## **In Our Stead**

Leviticus 1:3-4 states:

If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

God accepts the animal in place of the offerer. The offerer remains alive, and the animal represents him giving or sacrificing himself. In this respect, Christ becomes even more prominent, and we fade into the background, though not entirely.

Every man's acceptance before God depends upon perfect righteousness. An animal cannot sin, so in the imagery sinlessness is symbolically present. However, the sinlessness required for our acceptance

goes well beyond this. Paul writes in Romans 3:10, 23: "There is none righteous, no not one; . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jesus, though, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), took on flesh and blood as the seed of Abraham (John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14) and lived a perfect life (I Peter 2:22). His sinless life was acceptable to God, and by God's grace, we are accepted because of Christ. Thus, the offering must be without blemish; it must match Christ's sinlessness.

This also helps to explain the word "atonement" in Leviticus 1:4. Normally, we think of it in the sense of a "covering for sin." However, since sin is not contemplated in this offering, this understanding is incorrect here. In this case, *atonement* indicates "making satisfaction." God is satisfied because a requirement is met, not that His offended justice is satisfied.

This fact is important to understanding this offering properly. Notice Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31:

And he shall do with the bull as he did with the bull as a sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. . . .  
And he shall burn all its fat on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him. . . .  
. . . He shall remove all its fat, and fat is removed from the sacrifice of peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

Clearly, in the sin offering described here, *atonement* is used in the sense of "a covering," and therefore as a means of forgiving sin. By contrast, in the burnt offering sin is nowhere seen because it is not part of what the burnt offering teaches. In it, God is satisfied because the offerer has met His requirement through his life, by the righteous way he lives his life. Thus, the offering shows the offerer accepted.

However, not all sense of covering is lost in the use of "atonement" in Leviticus 1. Here, the essence of covering arises in the fact that the offering covers—is fitting or appropriate—in the sense of meeting all conditions. The conditions involve a life of sincere, wholehearted, and loyal devotion to God.

A vivid contrast to this is exemplified by the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:15-19:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Obviously, these people are not meeting the conditions of their relationship with God even though they are His children. Their lackadaisical, wishy-washy, self-righteous attitudes and self-absorbed, self-satisfied lives are totally unacceptable to Him. He casts them from His presence and commands them to change their ways. There is no covering for the conduct of their lives here.

## **Corban**

Leviticus 1:5 adds another distinction: "He shall kill the bull before the Lord." A life is offered. This distinction is quite significant once we understand that this offering typifies devotion and that this offering does not picture sin or the death of the offerer. In the offerings of Leviticus, a sacrifice is primarily perceived as a gift to God. Jesus uses the word "corban" in Mark 7:11. *Corban* itself means "gift" or "dedicated to God," and its root means "to bring near." Recall that the offerer is to lay his hand on the animal before it is killed to signify that the animal represents the offerer giving himself. Therefore, the killing of the animal represents the offerer bringing himself near, making a gift of himself, devoting his entire life to God. It indicates he holds nothing back.

Frequently, we have reservations. We hold back for any number of reasons, but usually they focus on something we hold too dear to give up. By contrast, Philippians 2:5-8 provides us with insight into what Christ sacrificed to devote His life wholly to God's purpose:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Having set the example of complete devotion to God's purpose, He wants us to follow it.

Leviticus 1:6-9 takes us another step into the total devotion that pleases God:

And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar; but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

The imagery of each part of the animal teaches us the following: The head signifies one's thoughts and judgments; the fat, one's general health, energy, and strength; the entrails, one's emotions; and the legs, one's walk, the actual conduct of one's life. Again, the burnt offering indicates total surrender to God; nothing is held back; nothing is reserved for the self.

Jesus' life provides us with ample examples of His dedication. His first recorded words—at age twelve—appear in Luke 2:49, "I must be about My Father's business." In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus reveals what He is to accomplish in this work, and in John 4:34, He shows His attitude by saying, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." John 19:30 records His last words as a man, "It is finished." Through His offering of His entire life, His gift of total devotion, He accomplished what God sent Him to do. Psalm 49:10-20 vividly contrasts how the worldly expend their energies and what they produce and how those wholeheartedly devoted to God work and what they produce.

### **The Burnt Offering's Varieties**

Leviticus 1:2-3, 10, 14 designates the animals that meet God's requirement for a burnt offering:

When anyone of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord. . . . And if his offering is of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. . . . And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the Lord is of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or young pigeons.

The imagery of the bullock is of patient, untiring, and successful labor in service to others. Proverbs 14:4 confirms this, "Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox." History shows that oxen will literally work themselves to death. Likewise, we have seen Jesus' devotion to the death in fulfilling God's will for Him, and II Corinthians 11 provides a long list of Paul's labors under frequent duress in fulfilling his calling.

The lamb represents passive, uncomplaining submission even in suffering, of following without reservation. Isaiah 53:7 says of Christ, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth."

Jeremiah makes a similar statement about an episode in his life: "But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more'" (Jeremiah 11:19). This does not mean he did nothing but that he was innocent of being the cause of the persecution inflicted upon him and that he accepted it without griping as his lot as God's servant.

In Romans 8:36, this symbolism is directly applied to us, "For [God's] sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." God expects us to follow the example of our Leader and others who have gone before us. Having this submissive attitude is not for destruction—even though on the surface it may seem that way—but following is necessary for preparation. Hebrews 5:7-10 reminds us that Christ also had to submit to be prepared for His responsibilities as our High Priest. We must consider following uncomplainingly as a necessary part of being a whole burnt offering. It is "not my will, but Yours be done" in practical application.

The turtledove and pigeon represent mourning innocence, powerlessness, meekness, and humility. No labor is symbolized here, nor is uncomplaining submission, but rather harmlessness, a proclivity to make peace, and even sadness. In Matthew 10:16, as Christ prepares to send the apostles out to represent Him, He instructs them: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Later, the apostle Paul instructs the much-beloved Philippian congregation:

Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. (Philippians 2:14-16)

Isaiah draws on a turtledove's characteristic to describe Israel's social situation:

We all growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; and as for our iniquities, we know them: In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. (Isaiah 59:11-15)

Overall, the turtledove's imagery is of humility mixed with sadness caused by the overwhelming accumulation of the effects of sin and repentant sorrow because we have been so much trouble to God. This quality is rewarding, as Psalm 147:3 comforts, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 34:17-19 adds, "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

The male goat represents strong-mindedness, singleness of purpose; and leadership rather than following. Interestingly, Scripture does not view the goat in nearly as good a light as a sheep. Perhaps this is so because people who exercise these characteristics are frequently offensive to their brethren and tend to go off in their own direction in their drive to achieve their goals. Unfortunately, a great deal of ego often accompanies leadership and initiative.

First, let us look at the good side. Jeremiah 50:8 contains this curious command to those living in Babylon. "Move from the midst of Babylon, go out of the land of the Chaldeans; and be like the rams [margin, *male goats*] before the flocks." Proverbs 30:29-31 from the *NIV* helps explain. "There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; a strutting rooster, a he-goat, and a king with his army around him." The imagery of a he-goat in its positive sense is of leadership. If it is among a flock of sheep, it assumes command. Along with this is a sense of dignity, stately bearing, and undaunted courage—but also a strong inclination toward haughtiness. We see the downside of the goat imagery in Matthew 25:33, 41 where Christ rejects the goats, representing people.

### **An Intercessor on High**

A further comparison of the operations of the offerer and the priest on the offerings reveals further distinctions. In Leviticus 1:5-17, we see that the bullock, sheep, and goat were cut up and washed with water, but the turtledove was not. It was split but not cut into pieces. This focuses mostly on the work of the priest who assists in the offering because, even for those who would be quite capable of performing this function, the priest is still required to do it for them.

Regarding the priest washing the parts with water, Ephesians 5:26 immediately comes to mind. Paul teaches that we—the offering as well as the offerer—are washed by the water of God's Word. However, the emphasis in Leviticus 1:5-17 is primarily on the operations of the priest. We begin to see Christ's intercessory work in this imagery, indicating that everyone, regardless of his seeming capabilities, needs the outside help of our High Priest.

Notice also the especially wide cost difference between a turtledove and the other animals. This suggests some have more required of them than others, which is confirmed in Luke 12:48: "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

This distinction is drawn even finer when we understand that with the bullock, sheep, and goat, the offerer slays the animal. However, the priest kills the dove. In fact, the priest does everything regarding the dove except bring it for sacrificing. John 10:11, 15, 17-18 explains this more fully:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. . . . As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. . . . Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

The priest voluntarily sacrifices Himself. We can understand in the offering of the turtledove that its death is seen as the work of the High Priest and Mediator, thus it emphasizes Christ's intercessory work for those who are weak. The weak require more help and not as much is required of them. God does not expect more of us than we can deliver.

This is explained further in Hebrews 2:16-18:

For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

In the burnt offering, we see Christ as both representative and example. He is representative in the real sense that His offering was *for* us. As I John 4:17 says, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment [right now; see I Peter 4:17]; because as He is, so are we in this world." We are accepted because of His representative acts on our behalf—in this case, not His death for the forgiveness of sins but His life lived sinlessly.

That totally devoted and sinless life paved the way for His crucifixion and gave God satisfaction. We are thus accepted before God with the same measure of acceptance as if we were Christ. However, at the same time, He is our example, as I John 2:4-6 clearly shows, to the end that we should strive to live with the same total devotion to our Father and His way as Jesus did.