

Three More Sacrifices: Why They Still Matter to Us (Leviticus 3-7)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Leviticus

I. Overview of the Five Offerings of Leviticus 1-7

- a. **Leviticus 1-5** discussed five types of sacrificial offerings that the priests would make. **Leviticus 6-7** discussed more rules associated with those offerings.
- b. In the prior lesson, we read **Leviticus 1-2** and addressed the first two types of offerings: the burnt offering and the grain offering. In this lesson we will cover the other three types of offerings.
 - i. Feedback I received from the prior lesson: people liked the *first half* of that lesson (where we discussed applications for us) much more than the second half (in which we read through both chapters in their entirety and discussed the specific sacrifices).
 - ii. Based on that feedback, I will be taking excerpts from the descriptions of the sacrifices in **Leviticus 3-7** and focusing on the applications for us. Please read the text on your own to get the most out of this material.
- c. The five offerings in **Leviticus 1-5** are:
 - i. Burnt offering
 - ii. Grain offering
 - iii. Peace offering
 - iv. Sin offering
 - v. Trespass offering
- d. I believe that the *entire sacrificial system* (all five of these offerings, plus other offerings such as the drink offering of **Numbers 15**) foreshadows aspects of Jesus' sacrifice, based on what it says in **Hebrews 8-10**.
 - i. Moses had to make and do everything *exactly as specified in the Law*, regarding the tabernacle system, because these things were "*a shadow and copy of the heavenly things*" (**Hebrews 8:5**).
 - 1. All of the details about the tabernacle and the sacrifices were significant and pointed to a greater sacrifice that would come in the future, in Christ.

- ii. “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (**Hebrews 9:11–14**, NKJV)
- iii. “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.’” (**Hebrews 10:1–6**, NKJV; the writer at the end is quoting from **Psalms 39** in the Septuagint, generally corresponding to **Psalms 40** in the Masoretic Text)
- e. In the prior lesson, we discussed the first two of the sacrifices:
 - i. Burnt offering characteristics:
 1. Male animal, without blemish.
 2. From among the cattle, sheep, goats; or doves or pigeons.
 3. Washed, then burnt up on the bronze altar.
 4. Blood of the sacrificed animal is sprinkled around the altar.
 5. None of this offering is to be eaten by priests. The whole body is consumed by fire.
 - ii. Grain offering characteristics:
 1. It consisted of fine flour or grain, or could be in the form of unleavened bread that was baked or fried.
 2. Oil and frankincense were to be offered with it.
 3. No leaven; no honey.
 4. It must be offered with salt.

5. A portion of the offering was reserved to be eaten by the priests.
6. Feedback, comments and questions I received following our previous lesson included:
 - a. Could this also point to the Lord's supper (sacred bread eaten)?
 - b. Did the oil and incense foreshadow the Holy Spirit and prayer?
 - c. What was the significance of the statement in **Leviticus 2:10**: "It is *the most holy* of the Lord's burnt offerings."?
- f. I try to answer questions like these by wrestling with the text of the Scriptures and considering insights made by any early Christians who commented on the text. Since I found very little from the early Christian writers on this, I am still left with many questions!
 - i. There is more specific information in the text regarding HOW to offer a particular sacrifice, rather than WHAT specifically the sacrifice was for.
 - ii. The distinction between the purposes of the various types of sacrifices is not always clear to me.
 - iii. In the Old Testament, often two or more types of sacrifices are being offered together, in association with one another.
 - iv. Again, it seems to me that all of them in some way point to Christ. Taken together, they also speak about what kind of lives God wants us Christians to be living now.

II. The Peace Offering

- a. Read **Leviticus 3:1-5; 3:14-17**.
- b. Characteristics of the peace offering included:
 - i. The animal to be sacrificed could be either male or female, but must be without blemish.
 - ii. The animal to be sacrificed could be from among the oxen, lambs or goats.
 - iii. The blood of the animal was to be sprinkled around the altar.
 - iv. The kidneys and inner fat were to be offered to the Lord.
- c. More specifics regarding the peace offering are provided in **Leviticus 7**.

- i. Read **Leviticus 7:11-16; 7:28-34**.
- ii. The peace offering could be associated with thanksgiving or with a vow.
- iii. Certain portions of the flesh were reserved to be eaten by priests (breast, right thigh) on the same day or the next day. However, anything that remained to the third day would be burned up.
- iv. Based on the text, it seems to me that in addition to the priests being able to eat a part of this offering, the people (non-priests) who were bringing the animal to be offered could eat other portions of the animal that was being sacrificed, as well.
- d. Some examples of Old Testament peace offerings include:
 - i. In **Deuteronomy 27:4-7**, where it says this was to be offered after they successfully enter the Promised Land.
 - 1. **Question:** Did the people also eat part of the peace offerings?
 - ii. In **Joshua 8:30-31** (or **Joshua 9:3-4** if you are reading from a translation based on the Septuagint text), where the sacrifice is made under Joshua after a victory over the city of Ai.
 - iii. In **1 Samuel 11:15** (designated **1 Kingdoms 11:15** in the LXX), where there is another account of a peace offering being given.
- e. It appears that the purpose of a peace offering was to bring peace and reconciliation: either between two (or more) people, or between God and man.
 - i. Christ became the *ultimate offering that brought us peace*.
 - 1. Read **Colossians 1:19-23**.
 - ii. The death of Jesus on the cross brought *peace, reconciliation and unity* between Jews and Gentiles, which thereby became one unified body (as one unified temple).
 - 1. Read **Ephesians 2:11-22**.
 - 2. We who were alienated from God and from each other have now been *reconciled*.

III. The Sin Offering and the Trespass Offering

- a. The sin offering. Read **Leviticus 4:1-17**.
 - i. I believe this is the first place in the Scriptures where someone is referred to by the title of "Christ / the Anointed One". In the Septuagint

(LXX) it refers to Aaron or his descendant, the one making the sin offering, as being “Christ (the Anointed One; Greek = χριστός) the priest”, in **Leviticus 4:5** and **Leviticus 4:16**.

1. Recall that in **Hebrews chapters 3-10**, Jesus is repeatedly referred to as our High Priest, the One who was foreshadowed by the high priests who served in the tabernacle and temple.
 - a. “*Christ* came as *High Priest* of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” (**Hebrews 9:11**, NKJV)
 2. Tertullian, an early Christian writer from Carthage, in North Africa, writing c. 198 AD, pointed to this reference in **Leviticus 4** as identifying Christ as the high priest, the Anointed One:
 - a. “Aaron is called ‘Christ,’ from the ‘chrism,’ which is ‘the unction;’ which, when made spiritual, furnished an appropriate name to the Lord, because He was ‘anointed’ with the Spirit by God the Father...”
 - b. (Source: Tertullian, *On Baptism*, chapter 7; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 672)
- ii. Things we learn from **Leviticus 4** regarding the sin offering include:
1. The *sin offering* was for sins committed “involuntarily” (that word, from the LXX, can also be translated “unknowingly”).
 2. Blood sprinkled in front of the veil (body of Jesus), in the holy place. Remaining blood poured out by the bronze altar.
 3. Interior parts of the animal offered (fat, kidneys) were burned on the altar.
 4. The remainder of the animal (practically the entire animal) was carried *outside the camp*, to a clean place where the ashes are poured out, and “burned on wood with fire”.
 - a. Note: There is no mention of an altar at this location “outside the camp”. With no altar and no grate, the body of the slain animal was to be laid *directly on the wood* and burned there.
- b. The trespass offering. Read **Leviticus 5:1-9**.

- i. The trespass offering is similar to the sin offering, but apparently *has a greater degree of guilt* associated with it (versus the guilt of sins associated with the *sin* offering).
- ii. Things associated with the *trespass offering* include:
 - 1. The offeror needs to confess the sin first, before bringing the trespass offering.
 - 2. Less costly animals can be used by those who are poor.
 - 3. The priest makes atonement, and it says the sins are “remitted”.
- iii. Read **Leviticus 7:1-7**.
 - 1. The trespass offering is offered on the altar of the burnt offering.
 - 2. The priest can eat part of this offering.
- c. Notice that there are some peculiar things associated with the *sin offering* (for involuntary sins), that are *different from any of the other offerings*. These unusual features include:
 - i. The body of the animal being sacrificed was burned up *outside the camp*, rather than in the tabernacle area.
 - ii. There, it was placed directly on wood (rather than on the metal grate of an altar).
- iii. Read **Hebrews 13:9-16**.
 - 1. This offering foreshadowed *how* and *where* Jesus Christ would die 400 years later!
 - a. He would *suffer* (as the animal’s body was burned with fire) *outside the camp* (i.e., outside the gates of the city of Jerusalem); and
 - b. With his body laid directly on the wood (of the cross).
 - 2. Note that often in Scripture, the term “*fire*” is used figuratively to describe a *painful trial*.
 - a. For example, in speaking about the suffering that Christians should expect, Peter says: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by *various trials*, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious

than gold that perishes, though it is *tested by fire*, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 1:6-7, NKJV)

- iv. **Question:** Why was the crucifixion of Jesus foreshadowed by the sin offering (for sins committed *unknowingly* or *involuntarily*), rather than by the trespass offering (which was for sins committed *knowingly*, for sins where a greater degree of personal guilt is involved)?

1. **Possible Answer:** While I can't know for sure the answer to the question, I will put forward one possibility.
2. Recall that Peter said to the Jews in Jerusalem: “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.” (Acts 3:13-17, NKJV)
 - a. Peter said that the Jews and their rulers, while sinning in killing Jesus, did not realize what they were doing (murdering the Christ, the Son of God, the one prophesied in all the Scriptures). Peter said that they committed this sin “*in ignorance*”. They would not realize (until later) the gravity of what they had done!
 - b. Could this be the reason why the *sin offering* (for sins committed unknowingly) was used to foreshadow the manner and location of the murder of the Christ?
 - i. This sacrifice foreshadowed that the Christ would suffer on the wood, outside the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

IV. Significance of These Sacrifices, for Us

- a. The pattern of prophecy we see here in Scripture has *three parts*.
 - i. Prophecy: What *will happen* to the Christ; found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

- ii. First fulfillment: What *did happen to Jesus Christ*; found primarily in the gospels.
 - iii. Second fulfillment: What *will happen to us Christians*, to those who follow Jesus, as revealed in the epistles and other New Testament writings.
- b. Some examples where we see this three-fold pattern include:
- i. He (and we) would suffer for a time, but such suffering will be followed by glory (**Isaiah 53**, **Luke 24:26**, **Romans 8:18**, **Hebrews 2:9-18**, **Hebrews 10-12** and **1 Peter 1-4**).
 - ii. He (and we) will rule over the nations in the end (**Psalms 2:8-9**, **Revelation 2:26-28**).
- c. The sacrifices described in **Leviticus** foreshadowed Christ, and point to *what we are called to do* as priests of the new covenant.
- i. Jesus was foreshadowed by the *High Priest*. He also was foreshadowed by *the sacrifices offered* by the High Priest, as explained in **Hebrews**.
 - ii. Similarly, we Christians are foreshadowed by the *other priests* and by *their sacrifices*.
1. Read **1 Peter 2:2-4** and **2:9-10**.
 - a. We are described by Peter as “a *holy priesthood* to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God” and as “a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, His own special people”.
 - b. Notice that Peter is writing this letter to Christian converts who are primarily from Gentile (non-Jewish) backgrounds. See **1 Peter 4:2-4**.
 2. Read **Romans 12:1**.
 - a. Paul also uses the language and imagery of the old sacrificial system, calling the Christians in Rome to “present your bodies *a living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable to God”.
 - b. Paul had just concluded the case he developed in **Romans 1-11** regarding the Jew/Gentile issue, with the parable of the olive tree, in **Romans 11**.
 - i. In Paul’s parable, the original cultivated olive tree represented the spiritual foundation God laid through the Jewish nation.

- ii. The argument of **Romans 1-11** is about these two groups of people: the branches broken off representing the Jews who rejected Christ, and the wild ingrafted branches representing the Gentiles who had faith in Christ.
 - 1. This is not a gospel presentation structured to explain how an unbeliever becomes a Christian!
 - c. This verse (**Romans 12:1**) is an important transition point in the argument Paul is making in **Romans**. It lays the foundation for what follows, in **Romans 12-15**.
 - d. According to both Peter and Paul, the sacrificial system (priests and offerings) was pointing forward to *what we now are called to do*, as followers of Jesus.
- iii. The new priesthood is open to all.
 - 1. Imagine a Jewish father asking his young son, in the first century, "What do you want to do for an occupation when you grow up? Would you like to become a carpenter, a mason, a fisherman, a farmer, a shepherd, or something else?"
 - a. Imagine that the boy answered, "I think I would like to become *a priest* when I grow up. That looks like a very important job!"
 - b. His father could very well respond, "I am sorry, but you are from the wrong family. Since we are not Levites and not descended from Aaron, it would be *impossible* for you to become a priest!"
 - c. However, according to Peter and Paul, today *anyone* can become a member of "the royal priesthood" of Christ, a much more important priesthood than the one established by Moses and Aaron.
 - d. Anyone, from any tribe or nationality, can become a member of this priesthood. Also, membership in this priesthood also is open to *women as well as to men*.
- iv. Priests have a job to do.
 - 1. Priests do not just sit around wearing nice robes. They have work to do! The job description for priests was simply:

- a. Offering prayers at all times, for all kinds of spiritual needs, interceding with the Lord on behalf of others.
- b. Offer acceptable sacrifices to God.
 - i. As under the old priesthood, there are several different types of sacrifices we are called to offer.
 - ii. Paul explains what it means to *offer our bodies as living sacrifices* in **Romans 12-15**. The sacrifices we are called to make include:
 - 1. We are now called to offer the “peace offering” of reconciliation.
 - a. Let us work for unity among all Christians.
 - b. We must reach out to the lost, to share the gospel with them and reconcile them back to God.
 - 2. We must be willing to suffer unjustly, without retaliating.
 - a. This includes submitting to the governing authorities.
 - 3. We are called to make material sacrifices from our own wealth, comfort and time, to help meet the needs of those who are poor and in need. This is an important aspect of loving our neighbors as ourselves.
 - iii. Peter provides his own examples of what it means to live as a member of God’s royal priesthood, in **1 Peter 2-4**.
 - 1. Servants are to be submissive to their masters, even if those masters are harsh.
 - 2. Wives being submissive to their husbands and husbands are to honor their wives.
 - 3. As Jesus suffered and died voluntarily, we too must be willing to follow His example and suffer for righteousness’ sake.

4. Like the burnt offering that burned up all the flesh of an animal being sacrificed, we also are called to put to death our fleshly desires.