

Unacceptable Offerings (Leviticus 22)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Leviticus

I. Review and Introduction to This Lesson

- a. **Leviticus 18-20**, which we recently completed, addressed a number of *moral and ethical laws*.
- b. In **Leviticus 21-22**, the focus shifts to *requirements for priests*.
 - i. The high priest in the old covenant foreshadowed Jesus, and the priests foreshadowed us (Christians).
 - ii. Several New Testament books point to us as the being new priesthood, including: **Romans, Hebrews, 1 Peter, Philippians** and **Revelation**.
 - iii. Therefore, the ministry of those priests and the regulations pertaining to them deserve careful attention, since they may well be foreshadowing things directly pertaining to us.
 - iv. Shadows in the Old Testament point to current realities.
 1. “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are *a shadow of things to come*, but the substance is of Christ.” (**Colossians 2:16-17**, NKJV)
 - a. The Exodus journey of the Jews from Egypt through the Red Sea and the Wilderness, on the way to the Promised Land was a foreshadowing of the Christian spiritual journey (**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**)
 2. In **Leviticus 22**, the main focus of the text is acceptable versus unacceptable offerings by the Old Testament priests. Likewise, the ways we serve God and one another are referred to as our spiritual sacrifices in several New Testament books. Therefore, we should expect to see important foreshadowings in the Old Testament to help us understand our own “acceptable service” to God.
 - a. In **1 Peter**, the apostle Peter says:
 - i. “... you... are being built up a spiritual house, a *holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God* through Jesus Christ.” (**1 Peter 2:4-5**, NKJV)

- b. In **Romans**, Paul says:
 - i. “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.*” (**Romans 12:1**, NKJV)
 - ii. According to this passage, we are now both the priests and the sacrifices being offered.
 - c. In **Philippians**, referring to the gift of support that the Christians had given him, Paul says:
 - i. “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, *a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.*” (**Philippians 4:18**, NKJV)
 - d. From the last chapter of **Hebrews**:
 - i. “*We have an altar* from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.” (**Hebrews 13:10**, NKJV)
 - ii. “Therefore by Him let us continually *offer the sacrifice* of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for *with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*” (**Hebrews 13:15–16**, NKJV)
3. Since the sacrifices offered by the priests under the old covenant *foreshadow us and our service to God*, let us consider the directions that God gave them with that in mind.

II. Do Not Approach the Lord While You are Unclean

- a. Read **Leviticus 22:1-9**.
- b. There were a few things one could do that would make you unclean.
 - i. That includes touching a “creeping thing”, which would make someone unclean for the rest of the day.
 - ii. The person who became unclean would need to wash in water to become clean again.
 - iii. Someone could not eat of the holy food during the time while he was unclean.

1. The priests could eat portions of certain sacrifices. Some also could be eaten by members of their families. The sacrifices that could be eaten included:
 - a. The grain offering (**Leviticus 6:8-9**),
 - b. The sin offering (**Leviticus 6:17-22**),
 - c. The trespass offering (**Leviticus 7:1-6**),
 - d. The peace offering (**Leviticus 7:29-32**), and
 - e. The wave offering (**Leviticus 10:12-15**).
- iv. It seems to me that Paul is addressing rules like these in **Colossians 2**.
1. It seems that some of the Colossian Christians were tempted to go back to following parts of the Law of Moses. Perhaps they were from Jewish background, or were being influenced by Judaizers (as in **Galatians**).
 2. Read **Colossians 2:13-23**.
 - a. We are no longer bound by the Law of Moses. It was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross.
 - b. Let no one judge us on the basis of observing (or neglecting) the practices of the Law of Moses. Those things were shadows of things to come; in Christ, we now have the realities.
 - c. We must not subject ourselves to the old regulations: “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch...”.
 3. The **Hebrews** writer makes the same point regarding the old priesthood and the rules associated with it.
 - a. “It was *symbolic for the present time* in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed *until the time of reformation*.” (**Hebrews 9:9-10**, NKJV)
- c. The *physical* things that could defile priests under the Law of Moses were shadows of the *spiritual* things that now can defile *us*.
- i. Read **Matthew 15:10-20**.

1. We are defiled by the evil things that *proceed from our hearts*; not by physical, external things.
- ii. Likewise, after we have been defiled (by sin) we must be *spiritually washed*. I think of the passages in the New Testament that speak of the importance of our being washed in water, in baptism; as well as ongoing washing thereafter.
 1. “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience *and our bodies washed with pure water*. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” (**Hebrews 10:19-23**, NKJV)
 2. From Paul’s account of his conversion, Ananias told him: “And now why are you waiting? Arise and *be baptized, and wash away your sins*, calling on the name of the Lord.” (**Acts 22:16**, NKJV)
 3. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (**1 John 1:7-9**, NKJV)
 - a. **Challenge:** Those who have been baptized, are you currently “walking in the light”? Are there any sins you need to repent of and confess, in order to be walking in the light again?

III. The Holy Food

- a. **Question:** If the priests foreshadow us Christians, and the defiling things foreshadow sin, what do you think the holy food (which the priests could eat, if they were undefiled) foreshadows?
 - i. “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, *all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink*. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” (**1 Corinthians 10:1-4**, NKJV)

1. The Red Sea crossing, “baptized in the cloud and the sea”, was intended to foreshadow Christian baptism.
 2. The spiritual food that sustained the people in the Wilderness seems to foreshadow the body and blood of Christ, which was given to sustain Christians through their spiritual journey. “They drank from the Rock... that was Christ”.
- ii. “*(Jesus said)* ‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.’ The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.’” **(John 6:51–58, NKJV)**
- iii. “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’” **(Luke 22:19–20, NKJV)**
- iv. Read **1 Corinthians 11:20-32**.
1. We must not eat the bread and drink the cup *in an unworthy manner*.
 2. Each person should examine and ‘judge’ him or herself before taking the spiritual food.
 3. Similar to the instructions given to the priests in **Leviticus 22**, we are not to eat in an unworthy, defiled state.
- v. I believe the Lord’s Supper was foreshadowed by (at least) three different things in the Old Testament, each of which illustrates something important.
1. The Passover Lamb, whose flesh was eaten in a special memorial meal associated with the 10th plague and exodus from Egypt (**Exodus 12, 1 Corinthians 5:7**).

2. The manna and water provided to sustain the Jews in the Wilderness, on their way to the Promised Land, the “spiritual food and drink” referred to in **1 Corinthians 10:3-4**.
 - a. This is the spiritual food to sustain us on our journey, until we reach the Promised Land we seek.
 3. The spiritual food from the sacrifices, which the priests were allowed to eat.
 - a. They could not eat of it while in a defiled condition.
 - b. If they had become unclean, they needed to be washed in order to become clean again (pointing to baptism, and then walking in the light and confessing sin).
- b. No foreigner may eat the holy food.
- i. Read **Leviticus 22:10-16**.
 1. Only the priests and those who directly belong to them can eat of this food.
 2. A hired servant could not eat of it, but a slave (one purchased and owned by the priest, thus a member of his household) could.
 3. If someone somehow mistakenly ate of this food who was not entitled to eat of it, that person would need to make restitution (replace, plus add 1/5 of the amount)
 - ii. **Question:** What might this foreshadow, if the priestly food is a shadow of the Lord’s Supper?
 1. Only one belonging to the priesthood is allowed to eat of this holy food.
 2. The Lord’s Supper, also referred to as the eucharist or communion, is limited to those who are Christians (baptized believers who are walking in the light).
 - a. It is open to all who belong to the priests, but closed to all others.
 - b. Consider how serious the Lord was about restricting access to the holy food in the Old Testament, in light of what it says to us at the end of Hebrews:

- i. "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." (**Hebrews 13:10**, NKJV)

IV. Unacceptable Offerings

a. Read **Leviticus 22:17-25**.

- i. The animals offered for sacrifice had to be without physical blemish or defect.
- ii. The animals offered as gifts by the Israelites could not be from the hands of foreigners. They had to be offered by the Israelites, the Lord's people.
 1. It says that *corruption and defects* (I assume spiritually) were in the foreigners.
 2. The Jews could not outsource to foreigners this responsibility to provide the animals to be sacrificed. The Jews had to offer animals that had been owned *by their own people*.

b. One of the main problems that the Lord had with the Jews in the book of **Malachi** was *offering defective animals* for their sacrifices. Consider the Lord's first specific complaint.

i. Read **Malachi 1:6-14**.

1. The Lord feels terribly dishonored by His people.
2. However, it appears that the people were *completely unaware* that the Lord was upset with them. Their attitude: "In what way have we defiled your name? ...How have we disparaged you?"
3. The priests are offering sacrifices to the Lord from the people, but the animals offered are the blind, the lame, the sick. This is exactly what the Lord told them *NOT* to do, in **Leviticus 22**.
4. People made vows to offer sacrifices to the Lord, and had healthy male cattle to offer, but offered the rejects instead.
 - a. **Question:** Why would someone do that?
 - b. Maybe they thought, "Well, it is going to *get burned up anyway*... so what difference does it make?" Or they wanted to keep the healthy livestock for breeding or for working the farm.

- c. **Bottom Line:** The people thought they could ‘get away with it’. However, the Lord was insulted with getting the rejects. This showed no love for God, no respect for Him, and no faith that He would provide.
 - i. They were still religious (had priests and made offerings), but somehow had lost their love for God.
 - ii. They were giving God the ‘left-overs’.
- c. **Question:** What do you think this “without defect” requirement might be foreshadowing?
 - i. The first thing many of us might think of is that this (like the Passover Lamb in **Exodus 12:5**) points to the sacrifice of Christ.
 - 1. “... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb *without blemish and without spot.*” (**1 Peter 1:18-19**, NKJV)
 - 2. The NIV translation reads, “a lamb *without blemish or defect*”.
 - 3. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet *without sin.*” (**Hebrews 4:15**, NKJV)
 - ii. However, the idea of offering as an “acceptable sacrifice” something that is valuable (as opposed to offering something diseased or defective, a reject) may also apply more directly to us.
 - 1. Read **Philippians 4:14-20**.
 - a. Here Paul uses the imagery and even the same word for “acceptable” sacrifice used in **Leviticus 22** to describe the material sacrifices that Christians had made to help him.
 - 2. In **Romans 12:1**, Paul says:
 - a. “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.” (**Romans 12:1**, NKJV)

- b. In **Romans 12-15**, Paul explains in detail what it means for us to offer our bodies as *living sacrifices that are acceptable to God*. That includes to:
- i. Have a humble, serving attitude;
 - ii. Use whatever gifts the Lord has given you to serve others;
 - iii. Honor others above yourself;
 - iv. Live at peace with all people to the extent possible;
 - v. Overcome evil with good;
 - vi. Submit to the governing authorities;
 - vii. Love one another, as an ongoing debt;
 - viii. Make no provisions for the lust of the flesh; and
 - ix. Avoid doing things that will cause your brother to stumble or fall.
- iii. The sacrifice to be offered that is “without spot or blemish/defect” refers not only to Christ, but to us as well. Our bodies are to be living sacrifices offered to God, without blemish.
1. “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, *without spot and blameless...*” (**2 Peter 3:14**, NKJV)
 - a. In the ESV it says, “*without spot or blemish*”.
- iv. **Question:** What is the lesson for us in this? What would offering a blemished or defective sacrifice to the Lord look like today? What is the *spiritual equivalent* of the sin that Malachi was addressing (offering diseased and rejected sacrifices to the Lord)?
1. In my opinion, this would be *offering to God what are essentially our left-overs as spiritual offerings*: offering things that don’t matter very much to us.
 2. God wants our first and best, our wholehearted devotion. That is the “acceptable sacrifice”.
 3. Just as the Jews that Malachi spoke to were surprised that God felt dishonored by them (for giving their leftovers), how many

Christians will be shocked when the Lord speaks to them, at the end?

4. Abraham had been willing to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, demonstrating that He really did fear the Lord. However, these people would not even sacrifice a healthy animal that they owned. Moses gave up all the treasures of Egypt. These are heroic examples of saving faith.
 - a. “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,” (**Hebrews 11:17**, NKJV)
 - b. “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” (**Hebrews 11:24–26**, NKJV)
 - c. Real saving faith, illustrated by both of these examples, is demonstrated by being willing to give up something that is of great value, out of love for God and in expectation that He will provide something greater for us in the end.
- v. Consider this in light of what Jesus said to the church in Ephesus, in **Revelation 2**.
 1. Read **Revelation 2:1-3**.
 - a. Thus far, this sounds like a great commendation of the church. Outwardly, this looks like a very solid church; certainly it appears to be in better shape than most churches today! Consider:
 - i. Good works are there.
 - ii. Great spiritual perseverance is there.
 - iii. They do not put up with evil people and wickedness in the church (unlike in Thyatira or as we read about in **1 Corinthians**).
 - iv. They do not tolerate false teachers or false doctrines.
 2. Read **Revelation 2:4-7**.

- a. While doing so well in many important things, they somehow *lost their first love*.
- b. While they may be offering good things, they are lacking the foundation of a deep love of God, and of Christ. In essence, these people are making a religious offering, but it is *like a diseased offering*.
 - i. An offering is being made, but God is not pleased with it.
- c. A brother in our house church recently commented to me that in his view, there were *two types* of churches: mission-driven churches and love-driven churches.
 - i. Mission-driven churches
 1. The driving force behind the church is pursuit of some spiritual mission. That mission could be evangelism or holiness, or perhaps fulfilling some other command of God.
 2. I personally have experienced that, involved many years in a church movement that was driven by the mission of world evangelism.
 3. I also have seen several churches that are largely driven to pursue the mission of holiness, or separation from the world.
 4. These mission-driven churches can generate great energy, accomplish extraordinary things, and produces something that may look good outwardly for a while.
 - a. However, there is something within them that is 'off the mark'. I believe that becomes even more apparent over time.
 - ii. Love-driven churches
 1. While mission-driven churches are not all bad, how much better to be a church that

has as its foundational, driving principle the love of God and love for one another.

- a. If we have a true love of God as our foundation, it will motivate us to lead holy lives.
 - b. If we have true love of God and love for our brothers, we will stay unified.
 - c. If we have true love for God and for our neighbors, we will embrace the mission of spreading the gospel, with the right motives.
2. To be honest, I realize that many churches that preach the most on loving God often fail to teach on repentance, holiness and fear of God.
- a. They incorrectly define 'loving God' as a little more than having a warm, sentimental, comfort-giving feeling toward God.
 - b. So many Christian churches mis-define 'loving God' just as they mis-define other key concepts such as 'grace' (which they turn into 'unmerited favor', or 'saving faith', which they falsely equate to the simple belief of a moment (without obedience and without perseverance).
3. We must *let the Bible define all these terms*, starting with what it means to *love God*.
- a. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments*. And His commandments are not

burdensome.” (1 John 5:2-3, NKJV)

- b. “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:3-4, NKJV)

- iii. Perhaps there is a third option: churches that are *not driven by anything!*

- 1. These are churches that exist, but they are *not ‘going’ anywhere*, and not doing much of anything of spiritual consequence.
- 2. In the context of the ‘driven’ analogy, I would consider them to be like a vehicle that is figuratively ‘in the breakdown lane’, with the travelers sitting on the grass having lunch!

V. Closing Challenges

- a. Don’t make diseased offerings to the Lord.
- b. Give God our first and best, not our left-overs. Don’t be like the people that the Lord had to rebuke through Malachi.
- c. Don’t become like the Ephesian church that Jesus rebuked in **Revelation 2**. They were religious, outwardly respectable, but had *lost their first love*. Their offerings were no longer pleasing to the Lord.
- d. Give the Lord your *first and best* (not your left-overs) in terms of:
 - i. Your heart, love and obedience.
 - ii. Your time, money and heart.
 - iii. Your devotional life, evangelism, holiness, and serving others.
 - iv. With all of this driven by the love of God and love of others.
 - 1. However, this must be a true, *Biblical* type of love; not the worldly kind.