

THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS

3. BURNT OFFERING

Leviticus chapter 1

The first of the five major offerings detailed in Leviticus is the Burnt Offering.

1. The Sacrifice

a. The Name: Burnt Offering

Hebrew; *'olah* = “ascending offering.”

LXX used the word *holokautoma*, that gives us the word “*holocaust*,” which means something that is totally consumed.

This is the leading fact about this offering: unlike other offerings, it was entirely consumed—all except the skin: Leviticus 1:9; 7:8.

b. The Victims

May be of the herd, flock or fowl: Leviticus 1:3, 10, 14

Male without blemish (except in case of doves or pigeons).

c. The Ritual

- Bulls offered at east side of altar by the door of the Tabernacle; there also the blood and crop of the fowls were cast: Leviticus 1:3, 15-16
- Lambs or kids offered at north side of the altar, Leviticus 1:11
- The offerer placed his hand on the head of the victim: Leviticus 1:4
- The offerer killed the victim and the priests sprinkled its blood around the altar: Leviticus 1:5
- The offerer “flayed” and dismembered the victim: Leviticus 1:6
The Hebrew word for *flayed* is commonly used of stripping a body of its armour. It means “make naked” and is the removal of the skin.
- The priests prepared the altar with fire, laid the head and fat on the blazing altar, washed the inward parts and the legs with water and then placed them also on the fire, to **burn all on the altar**: Leviticus 1:7-9
- The priest puts on his linen garments and breeches to take up the ashes, which he places by the side of the altar: Leviticus 6:10
- Then he changes out of his now soiled linen garments into others (probably another linen priestly suit) and carries the burning ashes to a clean place outside the camp: Leviticus 6:11.

d. The Result

The whole offering was declared to be *a sweet savour*, or as the Hebrew puts it, *a savour of rest unto the Lord*: Leviticus 1:9.

2. The Immediate Significance

- The Burnt Offering—in which all ascends to God and of which man takes no part—acknowledges man’s duty under the first and great commandment of the Law: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might* (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- It also recognizes man’s inability to keep that commandment, hence his need of an offering.
- Finally, it taught the Israelites that the blood atonement fully satisfied God to whom it was *a sweet smelling savour*, or literally, *a sweet savour of rest* (Leviticus 1:9).
- The Hebrew phrase is used in Genesis 8:21 of the Lord accepting Noah’s sacrifice. Interestingly, it is basically the same root word as the name Noah, “rest.” I like to link this with Isaiah 54:9, *this is as the waters of Noah unto me*—God’s covenant promise that His wrath will never again burn against His people. And where does that promise appear? Immediately after the great 53rd chapter of Isaiah, with its plain presentation of the atoning death of Christ. While His death in that chapter is defined more as a trespass offering than a Burnt Offering, the latter cannot be excluded. And it is on the basis of the atoning death of Christ that God can promise a complete deliverance from wrath.

3. The Spiritual Symbolism

- The Statements of Scripture
Psalm 40:6-8 clearly prophesies One whom God would send to fulfil all the types of the OT sacrifices.
Hebrews 10:5-7 teaches that David’s prophecy was fulfilled in Christ.
Hebrews 9:14 shows that He *offered himself without spot unto God*.
Ephesians 5:2 says that Christ gave *himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour*.
Philippians 2:8 emphasizes that the Lord Jesus *became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*.

- The details of the sacrifice
 - a. The command to provide a sacrifice to be slain, without which there could be no acceptance, stands in stark contrast to the glorious truth of the gospel that God has freely provided the sacrifice for us, even His own dear Son.
 - b. The limitation of sacrificial victims to domestic animals carries some beautiful truths:

First, they were easily accessible, near at hand. The Lord “did not wish them to go in pursuit of beasts for offering, for salvation is brought to our hand by our God” (Andrew Bonar).

Second, they were all (fowls excepted) *horned* animals. The horn is a symbol of power and honour, which makes horned sacrifices clear pictures of Christ of whom Jeremiah writes, ***their redeemer is strong*** (Jeremiah 50:34) and who, according to Paul, ***is able to save to the uttermost*** (Hebrews 7:25).
 - c. The stipulation of a male without blemish typifies Christ as the Second Adam, a true man, without sin.
 - d. The killing, flaying, dissection, wringing of the neck of the doves, and the shedding of the blood all picture the extreme agony of Christ our Substitute.
 - e. The ***savour of rest*** (Leviticus 1:9) shows that God has fully accepted Christ’s sacrifice and that He is satisfied, in the sense that His wrath against our sin has burned itself out in Christ.
 - f. The gift of the skin of the slain sacrifice to the offering priest teaches an important truth: Christ our great priest, as the result of His being obedient unto death for us, possesses ***the skin*** of His sacrifice. Now, what does the Bible teach that God first did with ***skins***? Genesis 3:21 says that God used them to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. That is the significance of the priest having a right to the skins of the Burnt Offerings: **the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of His atoning death, has the means, right and power to cover believing sinners with His own righteousness.**

- The four kinds of animal victims display differing aspects of the Saviour as our Burnt Offering:
 - a. *BULLOCK or young bull* (Leviticus 1: 3, 5): This is the picture of **strength in service and sacrifice** (Psalm 144:14; Proverbs 14:4).
 - b. *SHEEP* (Leviticus 1:10): This pictures Christ's **patience in suffering** (Isaiah 53:7 & Acts 8:32).
 - c. *GOAT* (Leviticus 1:10): This pictures Christ as the **substitutionary sin-bearer**. In Leviticus 16, we learn that on the Day of Atonement, the goat was the animal selected to bear the sins of the people. Though that referred to a sin offering not a Burnt Offering (for which a ram was used, verse 5), the typical significance of the goat in both is the same.
 - d. *TURTLEDOVES, PIGEONS* (Leviticus 1:14): These picture Christ's **personal sinlessness** (Matthew 10:16, *harmless as doves*).

4. The Personal Application

- The variety of victims teaches that Christ is available to, and able to save, all classes of people, rich and poor.
- Some commentators believe that the variety of victims pictures the differing levels of spiritual apprehension among those who come to trust Christ. Some have much clearer and deeper views of His atonement than others—but their acceptance with God depends not on the level of their understanding or the depth of their faith but on the merits of Christ whose atonement is their only plea with God.
- The offerer had to lay his hand on the head of the Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1:4) if it was to be accepted for him. This represents **personal confession of need, an honest turning to God from self (i.e. repentance) and a simple reliance on the merits of the sacrifice**.
- The Burnt Offering shows that we owe our full allegiance and devotion to the Lord. At our best we fail to meet our obligation, but our person and service are made **acceptable to God by (through) Jesus Christ** (1 Peter 2: 5).

This sacrifice that speaks so clearly of our Lord's entire devotion to His Father, and especially to His sacrifice to satisfy divine justice by bearing the punishment due to us for our sin, calls for a response of faith and love from us.

First, we must make sure we have placed our hand on the head of the sacrifice—that is, that we have personally taken Christ by faith.

Second, that as ***followers (imitators) of God as dear children*** we should be careful to ***walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour*** (Ephesians 5:1-2).