

THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS

6. THE SIN OFFERING (Leviticus 4)

The first three offerings were *sweet savour* offerings. They typify the absolute perfection of Christ's person and work as he gave Himself in entire devotion to His Father—and the Father's total satisfaction with and acceptance of the Redeemer and His sacrifice of atonement.

The last two offerings, the Sin and the Trespass Offerings were not sweet savour offerings. They typify Christ the great Sin Bearer for His people, as which He had to bear the wrath of God against our sin.

The distinction may indicate that while the Father took delight in our Lord's love, devotion and obedience to Him, He did not delight in the mere act of making Him sin for us, but in the fruit of that act.

The difference between the Sin Offering and the Trespass Offering is not easy to establish.

- The most common distinction is that the Sin Offering is for sins of ignorance while the Trespass Offering is for known sin.
However, that distinction, has to deal with the fact that Leviticus 5:6-13 prescribes a trespass offering for what are described as sins of ignorance.
- One suggestion for meeting this difficulty is the trespass offering included sins of ignorance where the degree of culpability is greater—that is, there are forms of ignorance for which men are personally responsible.
Again, the distinction runs into serious problems, for ultimately sinners are held guilty and responsible for all their spiritual ignorance.
- Another suggestion is that the Sin Offering deals with sins that are more public and the Trespass Offering with sins that are more private in nature (Andrew Bonar).
However, it is not clear that this is really the case—sins against the commandments, for which the Sin Offering was prescribed, may in some cases be private (e.g. covetousness) while sins against the holy things, for which the Trespass Offering is prescribed, may be public (as in the case of Eli's sons).
- Perhaps the best solution may be that generally the distinction is between sins committed ignorantly and those committed with knowledge, except that where the holy things of God are concerned ignorance is disallowed and a Trespass Offering is required (Leviticus 5:14-19).

The difficulty of Leviticus 5:6-13 may be met by seeing the use of the term *trespass offering* in verse 6 not as a specific reference to the Trespass Offering but as a general reference to an offering for guilt. The Hebrew term is used in this general

sense in various other places and and it seems to be demanded by the fact that Leviticus 5:6 goes on to specify the sacrifice is as a *sin offering*.

1. Some Peculiarities of the Sin Offering

- **It is the first offering where sin is specifically mentioned.**
 - a. In the Burnt, Meat and Peace Offerings the emphasis is on Christ offering Himself *without sin* for us. He is offering something precious to God as an atonement for our acceptance.
 - b. In the Sin Offering He is seen as the One *made sin for us* and offering Himself *for sin*.

- **Thus it is the first that is not said to be a *sweet savour* offering.**

We must not make too much of this, as some interpreters have done, for we are told that when the priest burned the fat and the inwards of the sin offering for one of the common people it was *a sweet savour*, Leviticus 5:31.

 - a. Some hold that while the Father took delight in Christ's perfection of person and obedience, He did not delight in His being made sin for us. But Isaiah 53:10 we read, *It pleased the Lord to bruise him*. The references is specifically to Christ our Sin Offering and we read that God was *pleased*—the word expresses *delight*—to deal with Him as such.
 - b. Yet the distinction between *sweet savour* and sin offerings is real—probably the best and simplest explanation is that the sweet savour offerings were for acceptance and the sin offerings were for expiation, portraying Christ *made a curse* [by God] *for us*

- **In the order of divine institution it comes after the sweet savour offerings, but in every place that details the order in which the offerings were actually made, it precedes them: Leviticus 8; 9; 14; 2 Chronicles 29: 20-27.**

In the experience of the believer—in the application of the atonement to him—Christ the Sin Offering is the first great truth to be grasped.

2. The Nature of the Sin Offering

Three things stand out:

- It was an expiation for *sins of ignorance*.
 - a. All men sin, even when they aren't aware of it.
 - b. This shows that they are sinners by nature, not merely because of certain isolated acts.
 - c. Ignorance of the law is no excuse or defence before God.

- It shows the *universality* of sin and again emphasizes that the problem is one of nature: Leviticus 4:3, 13, 22, 27, the emphasis more on people than on acts.

- It demonstrates the *penalty* of sin more clearly than any other offering.

3. The Grades of Sin Offering

- **For a priest:** Leviticus 4:3-12
 - a. Placed first because the priest's sin was the most dangerous, for by it the people could learn contempt for the altar of the Lord—e.g. 1 Samuel 2:17.
 - b. It was a bullock without blemish.
- **For the congregation:** Leviticus 4:13-21. Again this was to be an unblemished bullock.
- **For a ruler:** Leviticus 4:22-26. A male kid of the goats.
- **For one of the people:** Leviticus 4:27-35.
 - a. It could be a female kid of the goats, or a female lamb.
 - b. In the case of one who could not afford a kid or a lamb, it could be two doves or pigeons, Leviticus 5:7, one for a Sin Offering the other for a Burnt Offering.
 - c. If he could not afford two doves or pigeons, he could bring a modified Meal Offering, one without oil or frankincense, Leviticus 5:11-13.

4. The Ritual of the Sin Offering

- The Presentation: *before the Lord*, Leviticus 4:4
- The Identification: *lay his (their) hand*, Leviticus 4:4, 15, 24, 29.
- The Slaying: the victim killed on the *north side of the (brazen) altar*, Leviticus 6:25 with 1:11.
- The Use of the Blood:
 - a. In Offering the Priest and the Congregation: Leviticus 4:6-7, 17-18.
 - Bring it into the holy place and sprinkle it 7 times before (or upon) the vail.
 - Put it on the horns of the altar of incense.
 - Pour out the remainder at the bottom of the brazen altar.
 - b. In Offerings for Rulers and Common People: Leviticus 4:25, 30.
 - Put it on the horns of the brazen altar.
 - Pour out the remainder at the bottom of the brazen altar.
- The Separation of the fat that covered the inward parts: Leviticus 4:8-10
This was all burned on the altar.
- The Disposal of the Carcase: Leviticus 4:12, 20; 6:26
 - a. In those Sin Offerings for the priest or the congregation the carcase was burned outside the camp.
 - b. In Sin Offerings for individuals, the priest ate it.

5. The Message of the Sin Offering

- God has graciously made provision for sin of every kind, sin both in our nature and our acts; sin both in its root and its fruit.
- That provision is a blood sacrifice.
- The sacrifice was expiatory, vicarious and effectual—in a typical way, for the Sin Offering pointed to the once-for-all sacrifice for sin that the Lord Jesus made.

6. The Type Fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ

- The imputation of our sin to Christ: *Christ made sin for us*.
- The accommodation of the needs of even the poorest people reminds us that the Lord Jesus is provided by God for sinners of every kind.
- His blood sprinkled in the holy place:
 - a. The sevenfold sprinkling before the vail may speak of the continual offering of the OT sacrifices awaiting the time of His once-for-all sacrifice.
 - b. It also speaks of completeness: the total effectiveness of His blood to expiate our sin before God.
 - c. The floor of the holy place must have been soaked with blood—the only access to God is by a blood-sprinkled way.
 - d. The horns of the golden altar remind us that the power of Christ's intercession depends on the success of His sacrifice for sin. And the same is true for us if we are to have power in prayer: Hebrews 19:19.
 - e. The lack of all mention of the holy place and the altar of incense in the Sin Offering for individuals (the two lower grades of the offering) may remind us of the different levels of apprehension of the work of Christ that different classes of believers enjoy.
 - f. The blood poured out at the bottom of the altar: the public assurance to every believer that the blood of Christ has availed to expiate all their sin and guilt.
- His perfect merit accepted by God—typified by the burning of the fat on the altar.
- His suffering *once for sin outside the gate*, Hebrews 13:12.
- His effectual putting away of sin by the sacrifice of himself.

7. The Personal Application of the Sin Offering to Us

- The Sin Offering portrays the severity and mercy of God. *Severity* establishes our guilt as lawbreakers; *mercy* points to the sacrifice and invites us to *hear his voice and harden not our hearts*.
- And to every believer it is a clarion call to separation unto Christ: Hebrews 13:12-13, *Let us go forth therefore unto him, without the camp*.