

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Leviticus - Lesson #1

In the Book of Exodus, the children of Israel were miraculously delivered from Egypt, led by Moses. They went through the Red Sea (a type of water baptism), and they were led forward by the pillar of cloud and fire (a picture of the Holy Spirit). God then brought them to Mt. Sinai where they received the law and instructions to build the Tabernacle. At the end of Exodus, they built the Tabernacle exactly according to God's plan. Now they are ready to make it a functioning place of worship and sacrifice unto God. The Book of Leviticus continues where the Book of Exodus left off. Throughout the events of Leviticus, the children of Israel remain camped at the base of Mt. Sinai.

The Tabernacle was a place of sacrifice which (for the ancient Israelites) was God's only way of approach to Him. Leviticus introduces us to offerings that were to be made unto God in the Tabernacle. There are five different kinds of offerings (or sacrifices) that are mentioned in the first five chapters of Leviticus.

We read in Exodus that the children of Israel left Egypt in the first month of the new year, the month of Abib:

Exodus 12: 1 (NKJV) Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, **2** "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Exodus 13:3 And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage... **4** On this day you are going out, in the month Abib.

At the end of Exodus, we read that the Tabernacle was constructed one year later while the Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai.

Exodus 40:17 And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up.

Now that the Tabernacle has been assembled, the priests are ready to begin their work. Leviticus opens with a description of the five different types of offerings to be brought to the Tabernacle. It is important that we study the sacrificial system of ancient Israel so we can see two things: 1) each one points to Jesus Christ, and how 2) each one speaks to us as New Testament believers.

THE FIVE OFFERINGS OF LEVITICUS

The five offerings (sacrifices) that are presented in Leviticus are:

The burnt offering, or whole burnt offering (Lev. 1, 6:8-13)

The grain offering, or meal offering (Lev. 2, 6:14-23)

The peace offering, or fellowship offering (Lev. 3, 7:11-36)

The sin offering (Lev. 4, 5:1-13, 6:24-30)

The trespass offering, or guilt offering (Lev. 5:14-19, 6:1-7, 7:1-10)

Leviticus Chapter 1

Leviticus 1:1 (NKJV) Now the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, **2** "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.

God now speaks to Moses from the Tabernacle. After all, this was God's seat. God now dwelt on the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, and God said in Exodus 25:22 that He would speak to them from the Mercy Seat. God was in His place, and now He wanted His people to prepare to offer the sacrifices so they could approach God His way.

Leviticus is not the first time in Scripture that humans were aware of animal sacrifices to God. Adam, Cain, Abel, Noah, and Abraham all understood sacrifice. Even other nations offered sacrifices to their heathen gods. The fact that nations all over the ancient world knew about sacrifice testifies to the fact that it was a concept that Noah brought off the ark and established.

So the instructions that God gives in Leviticus regarding sacrifices in the Tabernacle were not totally foreign to the Israelites. Now that the Tabernacle was built, God could present to them His one way and plan for sacrifice to Him. It would be written down for the first time and set in God's code of law. Instead of someone building an altar just anywhere and offering a sacrifice just any way, God had his place, His way, His time, His priests, His method, and His choice for the sacrifices. For us, these sacrifices have tremendous meaning, speaking of Jesus Christ and holy living in the future New Testament age.

The Burnt Offering - The Sacrifice of Total Surrender

Leviticus 1:3 '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.

The burnt offering is sometimes called a *"whole burnt offering"* (see Psalm 51:19, and Mark 12:33). The reason the word "whole" is added is because the whole animal is burned on the altar (for other offerings, only a part of the animal is burned on the altar). Perhaps the term *"whole burnt offering"* best illustrates its meaning. The burnt offering speaks of total devotion and surrender to God.

Leviticus 1:4 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. **5** He shall kill the bull before the Lord; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that *is by* the door of the tabernacle of meeting. **6** And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. **7** The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. **8** 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; **9** 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.

10 'If his offering *is* of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a burnt sacrifice . . .

14 '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 burnt offering was a male of the herd (a bull) or of the flock (a sheep or a goat). It was without blemish, and it was given with a freewill. The offerer placed his hand on the animal's head, making a connection with it as a substitution. It was brought to the Tabernacle by the offerer who then slit its throat to kill it. Then the priest took over and collected the blood, sprinkling it around the altar. The priest skinned the animal and cut it into pieces. The priest placed the pieces of the animal on the wood on the fire in a certain order. The entrails and the legs of the sacrifice were washed with water before being placed on the fire. All of the sacrifice was burned on the altar (it took all day or all night to burn, and the fire was not to go out). Poor people could offer a turtledove or pigeon as a burnt offering. Anyone could offer a "whole burnt offering."

In regards to Christians, this offering speaks of total surrender to God, since the sacrifice was totally consumed (except for the hide which was given to the attending priest). All of the offering was burned, the smoke ascending heavenward as "*a sweet savor*" to God (or "a pleasing aroma" to God).

Concerning Jesus Christ, this offering speaks of His total devotion and commitment to His Father's will throughout His life, even to the point that He was willing to go to Calvary. Look at the connection between the following verses:

Psalm 40:6 Sacrifice and offering You did not desire...

Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.

7 Then I said, "Behold, I come;

In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.

8 I delight to do Your will, O my God,

And Your law *is* within my heart."

John 8:28 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

When a person lives in total commitment and devotion to God, this brings a solid assurance that God is ever-present and that He approves of that life. Jesus was the first to accomplish this, and through His sacrifice and the power of the Holy Ghost, we can accomplish this as well. What greater thing is there than to know God is always there and He approves of us?

Paul writes of total devotion, following Jesus' example of total devotion:

Philippians 2:5 (NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, **7** but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. **8** 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.

THE SWEET SAVOR (or SWEET AROMA)

In the Scriptures concerning the burnt offering, we are first introduced to a phrase - a "*sweet aroma*" to the Lord. Not all of the offerings were "a sweet savor" to God, but the burnt offering was.

In a way, the altar can be seen as “God’s table” and the sacrifice as “God’s food.” It ascends to Heaven by the smoke. This is figurative, but the sacrifice on the altar *is* God’s portion. The reason the burnt offering was a “sweet aroma,” was because it was without blemish and it was given freely. God was pleased with it.

We all enjoy good food. Food that is fresh and prepared well is greatly appreciated and enjoyed. Food that is putrid or spoiled is not appreciated. Likewise, an offering given to God that is our best is appreciated by God and enjoyed.

The New Testament makes reference to the “sweet aroma:”

Ephesians 5:1 (NKJV) Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. **2** 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.

THE ANIMALS OF THE BURNT OFFERING

Several different animals are mentioned in Leviticus 1 that can be brought for a burnt offering. The bull is an animal that speaks of patient, untiring labor and service to others. The pioneers who went west on the Oregon Trail chose oxen over mules most of the time. Mules have a reputation for stubbornness, but oxen were easier to control, and they were willing to eat any kind of grass on the way. Oxen have been known to “work themselves to death.” There are some people that are as faithful as an ox, giving themselves in tireless labor.

The lamb is thought of as a passive, uncomplaining and submissive animal who follows willingly:

Isaiah 53:7 He [Messiah] 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.

The he-goat, or male goat, pictures a person who is strong-minded - a leader with purpose. We know that goats are not thought of as highly in Scripture as are sheep. People who have leadership qualities are more likely to offend their brethren than those with lamb-like qualities. While people tend to like the lambs better, it’s usually the goats that get more accomplished (both are needed in God’s great church).

The turtledove and pigeon speak of innocence, powerlessness, meekness, and humility - and sometimes sadness. They are not ones for strong labor like the bull or ox, nor for uncomplaining submission like the lamb. They definitely are not leaders like the ram. Their claim to fame is that they are peacemakers:

Matthew 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

The turtledove speaks of repentance and humility.

Psalm 34:17 *The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.*

18 The Lord *is* near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Another fact concerning the turtledove is that it was not cut up and washed with water like the bull, sheep, or goat. It was split apart, not cut into pieces:

Leviticus 1:15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off its head, and burn *it* on the altar; its blood shall be drained out at the side of the altar. **16** And he shall remove its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar on the east side, into the place for ashes. **17** Then he shall split it at its wings, but shall not divide it completely; and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that *is* on the fire. It *is* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

The offerer did not kill it, but the priest did. Turtledoves are the humble and the weak. The only thing the offerer does is bring the bird to the Tabernacle. Those who are weak require more help than the spiritually strong, and not as much is required of them. There are those who offer little more than presenting themselves in the house of God. However, they, too are a part of the church. God expects from us only what we are able to deliver.

We can see Jesus in the positive aspects of these animals. He is the strength and undying determination of the bull, the meek follower of God's will in the lamb, the purposeful leader of the ram, and the humble heart of the turtledove.

A burnt offering was totally consumed by fire on the altar, picturing total surrender and devotion.

In review, here are some important points regarding the burnt offering:

- 1) It is a "sweet savor to the Lord" or "pleasing aroma," because it is given out of heart-felt devotion, and sin is not pictured in it
- 2) It is offered to God in the place of the offerer
- 3) The life of the animal is given (representing total surrender)
- 4) It is completely consumed, or burned up (also representing total surrender or devotion).

The animal for sacrifice was without blemish and it was given with a freewill. It was killed by the person bringing it (the offerer), then the priest took over after that. The animal was cut into four parts: the head represents the thoughts, the legs represent the walk, the inner parts (guts) represent the heart or the feelings, the fat represents health and strength.

Look at the following Scripture:

Mark 12:29 (NKJV) Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments *is*: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment.

Leviticus Chapter 2 - The Grain Offering

Leviticus 2:1 (NLT) "When you present grain as an offering to the Lord, the offering must consist of choice flour. You are to pour olive oil on it, sprinkle it with frankincense, **2** and bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests. The priest will scoop out a handful of the flour moistened with oil, together with all the

frankincense, and burn this representative portion on the altar. It is a special gift, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. **3** The rest of the grain offering will then be given to Aaron and his sons. This offering will be considered a most holy part of the special gifts presented to the Lord.

4 "If your offering is a grain offering baked in an oven, it must be made of choice flour, but without any yeast . . . **5** If your grain offering is cooked on a griddle . . . **7** If your grain offering is prepared in a pan . . .

8 "No matter how a grain offering for the Lord has been prepared, bring it to the priest, who will present it at the altar. **9** The priest will take a representative portion of the grain offering and burn it on the altar. It is a special gift, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. **10** The rest of the grain offering will then be given to Aaron and his sons as their food. This offering will be considered a most holy part of the special gifts presented to the Lord.

11 "Do not use yeast in preparing any of the grain offerings you present to the Lord, because no yeast or honey may be burned as a special gift present to the Lord . . . **13** Season all your grain offerings with salt to remind you of God's eternal covenant. Never forget to add salt to your grain offerings.

Now we are introduced to the second offering of Leviticus - *the grain offering*, or meal offering. The offering is either fine flour with olive oil and frankincense, or it is these ingredients baked or cooked somehow as bread *without yeast* (yeast representing sin). Salt is another important ingredient in the grain offering.

The KJV calls the grain offering a "meat offering," showing how the meanings of some words change over time (back in King James' day, the word *meat* meant "food"). So what the KJV calls a "meat offering" is called in more modern translations a "meal offering" or a "grain offering."

Another word that has changed over time in the English language is "corn." The KJV says:

Leviticus 2:14 (KJV) And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears.

The word for "corn" in the above Scripture could not mean the corn that we know today which is yellow kernels on a cob. Corn was native to the Americas and did not make it to Europe or the Middle East until after Columbus' voyage. Again, this word "corn" in the KJV is translated "grain" in modern translations. When the Bible (KJV) says "a corn of wheat," it means a grain or kernel of wheat (John 12:24).

The Bread of Life - Jesus Christ

Jesus refers to His flesh as "bread." Bread nourishes the physical body, and Jesus' body brings *spiritual* nourishment to us, because through His sacrifice we can have forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God. This is a spiritual concept.

Luke 22:19 (NKJV) 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."

John 6:32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Sweet Savor Offerings

Like the burnt offering, the grain offering is also a "sweet aroma" or a "sweet savor" offering unto the Lord. Since it is without yeast, it speaks of the man Christ Jesus who was without sin. Unlike the burnt offering which was completely consumed, only a small part of the grain offering was offered on the altar, but the rest was given to the priests for their food.

The burnt offering was a blood sacrifice and was totally given to God. Blood is life, so we see in the burnt offering a life given in surrender to God. But the grain offering is bloodless - a part was given to God on the altar *but the rest was given to the priests*. It speaks of a life given in service for others - not just in thought but in action, and when we serve others it is as if we are serving the Lord.

Burnt Offering and Grain Offering Together

Therefore, putting together the burnt offering and the grain offering, we can look at the following Scripture:

Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?"

37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' **38** This is *the* first and great commandment. **39** And *the* second *is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

The grain offering was offered *with* the burnt offering. Look at these examples from Old Testament Scripture:

Leviticus 14:20 And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar.

Numbers 7:87 All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve young bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs in their first year twelve, with their grain offering . . .

Judges 13:19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord . . .

The grain offering was placed with the burnt offering after the burnt offering was placed on the altar. Regarding Jesus Christ, we see Jesus submitting His will to do God's will, then He gave His own flesh on Calvary as payment for our sin debt. Jesus loved in a perfect way, and He gave His will and His own self (His flesh) because of His great love for both God and man.

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

The Apostle John puts these two concepts together - that of loving devotion to God *and* to man - just as the burnt offering and the grain offering were put together:

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? **21** And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

Fine Flour

In order for grain to be made into bread it must be crushed. The body of Jesus Christ was bruised, crushed, and ground - to pay the debt for our sins:

Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.

For us as New Testament Christians, giving ourselves to others in love and service will result in some bruising as well. The majority of trials that Christians endure involve *people* - people who disappoint us, people who let us down, people who offend us, people who fail God after we have invested much time and effort in their lives. These people are our friends, our relatives, our brothers and sisters in the local church, our co-workers, etc. If there's one thing we can count on, we are going to have trouble with people! Paul said:

Philippians 2:1 (NLT) Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? **2** Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. **4** Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

Sometimes we say, "I want to be more like Jesus." This is commendable, but be advised that Jesus was bruised - far more than any man - and He was bruised by people. The more we become like Jesus, the more we are going to experience bruising, probably not in a physical sense, but we *will* have hurts and trials. But just as wheat is ground to become fine flour to make delicious and nutritious bread, if we can make it through the bruising with a good attitude, keeping our spirit intact, then we can also be a "sweet savor" to the Lord as a grain offering.

Olive Oil

Not only was flour an ingredient in the grain offering, but olive oil was added. The oil is produced by crushing the olive berries in an olive press. Without the crushing there will be no oil.

Oil in Scripture is a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God. When someone was anointed, oil was poured on him as a symbol of God's Spirit resting on him for God's purpose.

As we offer ourselves for service (the flour), we need the anointing of the Holy Ghost. It is God's Spirit that guides our service to others, giving us a right attitude and perspective, making our intent correct in His sight. Otherwise, service to others could be vain, done for self glory, or out of the will of God.

Frankincense

Another ingredient in the grain offering was frankincense. Frankincense is an aromatic resin obtained from a certain tree. It was burned as incense. The Hebrew word for it is *labonah*, which means "white," because the resin was white in color. Frankincense was very expensive and was found in parts of North Africa, Arabia, and India. Harvesting it was time consuming. The Egyptians used it, so the children of Israel who were delivered from Egypt were familiar with the substance.

Perhaps frankincense helped to give the burnt offering and the grain offering their "sweet savor" or "pleasing aroma" as the Lord received the smoke from these two offerings that were made together.

Incense in the Scriptures speaks of prayer unto God:

Psalm 141:2 (NKJV) Let my prayer be set before You as incense,
The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Without prayer unto God, our service to others might fail or turn to bitterness as trials and problems come. Prayer will help to keep our attitude correct, and prayer will go up to God for His help and assistance in our daily lives.

Leaven or Yeast, Honey and Salt

Honey is an ingredient that Leviticus states *must not* be added to the grain offering. This, along with yeast, were not to be added to the grain offering (although an Israelite woman might have added these ingredients to her normal bread that she made for her family). Honey is sweet, and the Bible warns us not to eat too much of it. Proverbs 25:27 associates honey with glory. Honey will burn when heat is applied, and the smell is not pleasant. We can see that honey (glory) has its place, but not in solemn offerings to the Lord. There is a time for glory, and there is a time for laying aside glory.

As we have said previously, yeast or leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 5:6 (NKJV) Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **7** Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. **8** Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

Salt was to be offered with the grain offering. Salt preserves food and brings out flavor. The Bible talks about a "covenant of salt," which speaks to us of the enduring faithfulness of God's promises. Since salt preserves, it is used to indicate enduring qualities - God's promises are absolutely sure.