



Bread and Blood at the Table

Kicking It Off

Who is someone you would be thrilled to have accept a homemade gift from you, and what would you bring them?

Read

Leviticus 2:1-16
and 3:1-17

Summary

Leviticus 2 and 3 give us the grain offering and the peace offering, and together with the burnt offering in chapter 1 they make a progression worth saying out loud. Nobody eats the burnt offering, the priests eat the grain offering, and everybody eats the peace offering. The book is moving toward a meal.

The grain offering is the cheap one. Flour, oil, frankincense, and salt, all of it already sitting in an ordinary kitchen. The Hebrew word behind it is what a subject carries to his king, so bringing one is an act of allegiance before it is anything else. And every bit of it came out of a field God grew, which means the worshiper is handing back what he was already given. The priest burns a handful and the rest becomes somebody's dinner.

Then the chapter turns and says what may not come. No leaven and no honey, and salt every time, because it is the salt of the covenant. Neither leaven nor honey is unclean, and Scripture never calls them evil, so this is not about God disliking an ingredient. It is about God saying how He is approached. That cuts against a habit most of us have, which is treating our own sincerity as the standard. Jesus never measures love that way. He says the people who love Him keep His commands.

Chapter 3 opens exactly like chapter 1. Hand on the head, killed at the entrance of the tent, blood thrown against the sides of the altar. What is missing is the language about atonement. Same blood, and the purpose has moved from getting right with God to being with Him. The peace offering ends in a shared meal in God's presence, and that meal is what all the blood and smoke were for. We no longer bring the sacrifice, because

God already prepared it, which means at the table we are not only being forgiven, we are being seated.

Discussion Questions

1. Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?
2. The grain offering was flour and oil from an ordinary kitchen rather than something rare, and the point was tribute rather than expense. What do you actually carry with you when you come to worship or to prayer?
3. Everything in the offering came from a field God grew, so the worshiper was handing back what he had already been given. Where are you most tempted to count your own effort instead of naming what you have as a gift?
4. God kept leaven and honey off the altar and required salt every time, and none of those are moral categories. How do you respond to a command from God when you cannot see the reason behind it?
5. Jesus said that the people who love Him are the ones who keep His commands, which puts obedience ahead of feeling. Is there a place where your affection for God is running well ahead of your obedience to Him?
6. Chapter 3 repeats chapter 1 almost word for word and drops the language about atonement, because this offering is about being with God rather than getting right with Him. Do you spend more energy on being forgiven or on sitting at the table?

Significant Quotes from Sermon

"You aren't required to give a grain offering. You are privileged to give a grain offering."

"You're the one who waters it. You're the one who causes the seed to sprout. My small tribute isn't even mine. It is Yours."

"We've overindexed how important sincerity is in worship. Jesus doesn't say the way I'm going to determine your love is how sincere you are."

"Your sacrifices were never going to be good enough. You need to partake in the sacrifice which was already given to you."

Sermon Notes**Leviticus 2-3**

“When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it and bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the Lord’s food offerings.

“When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil. You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. And you shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the Lord, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the Lord’s food offerings.

“No grain offering that you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the Lord. As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the Lord, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

“If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the Lord.

“If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the Lord, he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron’s sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

“If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering to the Lord is an animal from the flock, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. If he offers a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before the Lord, lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it in front of the tent of meeting; and Aaron's sons shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. Then from the sacrifice of the peace offering he shall offer as a food offering to the Lord its fat; he shall remove the whole fat tail, cut off close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. And the priest shall burn it on the altar as a food offering to the Lord.

“If his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before the Lord and lay his hand on its head and kill it in front of the tent of meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. Then he shall offer from it, as his offering for a food offering to the Lord, the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. And the priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering with a pleasing aroma. All fat is the Lord's. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood.”

Outline

1. Nothing In the Offering Started With the Worshiper
 - a. Leviticus keeps us looking at the holiness of God and at ways higher than ours, and our instinct is to make worship convenient instead. We do not come to be entertained.
 - b. Approaching God is not for your comfort. It will lead to your comfort. You approach because He is worthy, He is holy, and He has it figured out.
 - c. Come as you are, and understand there is a cost attached. Israel assumed this: an animal for the burnt offering, flour and oil and salt from the kitchen for the grain offering, another animal for the peace offering, all so they could stand in His presence.
 - d. The grain offering is flour, oil, and frankincense (Leviticus 2:1-3), the cheapest offering in the book, because the point is tribute rather than expense. *Minchah* is what a subject carries to his king.
 - e. You are not required to bring a grain offering, you are privileged to bring one. The wonder is that God receives it at all.
 - f. Nothing in it started with the worshiper. He plows and plants and pulls weeds, and God waters, sprouts the seed, and sends the sun. Cain and Abel both brought a *minchah* (Genesis 4:3-5), and grain is a proper tribute, so the difference was the heart that handed it over.
2. God Says What May Come Near Him and What Is His Alone
 - a. No leaven, no honey, and salt every time, the salt of the covenant with your God (Leviticus 2:11-13). Leaven and honey ferment and salt preserves, and underneath the mechanics the reason is that God said so.
 - b. Scripture does not call leaven or honey evil. It tells the worshiper how an offering is prepared, so follow what God says rather than what you say.
 - c. We have overindexed on sincerity. Jesus never measures love by fervor. Those who love Him keep His commands and do the will of His Father.
 - d. An offering made on our own terms is honey baked bread, and God is right to refuse it, which is the shape of the move that keeps Jesus and sets His commands aside.
 - e. The command now is to partake in the grain offering already given, the body of Christ, and then to live in obedience: love God, love others, and forgive seventy times seven rather than settling for five.
3. The Blood Was Shed So That a Family Could Eat In God's Presence
 - a. Leviticus 3:2 repeats Leviticus 1:4 almost exactly, hand on the head, killed at the entrance, blood against the sides of the altar. The burnt offering says you are atoned and accepted, and the peace offering says come and sit down.

- b. Israel's neighbors wanted their gods far off because their gods were capricious. Israel wanted to dwell with God, and God answered by giving them Leviticus rather than leaving them to guess.
- c. You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for He Himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:13-14). Same blood logic, eternal blood.
- d. Across three chapters, nobody eats, the priests eat, everybody eats. The cup of blessing is a participation in the blood of Christ and the bread a participation in His body, and those who ate the sacrifices in Israel were participants in the altar (1 Corinthians 10:16-18).
- e. Your sacrifices were never going to be good enough, which is why every sermon is about Jesus. Communion is celebration rather than mourning, because nothing you did generated the body and the blood.
- f. Neither the building nor the clothes make worship acceptable. Bringing Christ does, and obedience follows, freer than rule keeping, because His ways are higher than ours and the Spirit lives in the temple you have become.

Notes

Three weeks in, somebody is wondering why we are still in Leviticus, so I want to answer that out loud. This book keeps making me look at the holiness of God and at the fact that His ways are higher than mine, and I do not get that anywhere else at this concentration. What has happened in our world is that we have turned worship into something convenient for us. There was a pastor in Chicago, Bill Hybels, who went door to door as a young man asking people what kept them from church, took all that data, and set about removing everything that made church boring. I believe he wanted people to come to faith and I will not disparage that. I disagree firmly with where it landed, because worship is not for your entertainment.

Leviticus says the opposite. When you approach God it is not for your comfort and not for what you want. It will lead to your comfort, and it will lead to the things meant to be good in your life, and none of that is why you approach. You approach because He is worthy, because He is holy, because He is wiser than you. We do not come because we have it figured out. We come because He does. The book reads as repetitive and confusing, and people ask why there are so many sacrifices when we believe in Jesus and the old law is finished. What I find in Leviticus is Jesus, clearly, not abolishing the law but fulfilling it. It runs the other way from how we usually say it. Leviticus is describing Christ.

That means something uncomfortable is true. You bring tribute before you dwell. People hear that and ask whether God should not simply meet them where they are, and as a person I want to say yes, come as you are, He will accept you and embrace you, and I do not think that is wrong to say. And it absolutely does matter, because the whole purpose of these sacrifices was God telling Israel that approaching Him carries a material cost. They would have said obviously. An animal for the burnt offering. A trip to the kitchen for flour and salt. Another animal when the occasion called for it, and its blood on the altar. All of it so they could be in His presence.

Leviticus 2 opens with fine flour, oil, and frankincense, a handful burned as the memorial portion, the rest going to Aaron and his sons. A grain offering is cheap. Every household had flour on a shelf. So it was never about expense, it was about tribute. The Hebrew is minchah, and when you go before the Lord He is your king, which means you do not arrive empty handed and you do not say hey, what's up, king, let's hang out. And I think Israel was already misreading this in the direction we do. You are not required to bring a grain offering. You are privileged to bring one. The posture is not God, You need this. The posture is, I cannot believe He took it. If a famous neighbor answered his door and you handed him a gift, he would look at you like you were dangerous. Bake him cookies, have him eat one and say it was good, and you would never stop telling people.

That is the heart of the grain offering. The wonder is not that we gave, it is that He received.

God did not build this system because He enjoys regulations. The regulations are an invitation into relationship. And the grain makes the point, because grain comes out of the ground and the ground is His. If I had a field I would plow it and plant it and pull the weeds, and He waters it, He makes the seed break the surface, He makes the sun shine. My small tribute was never mine. It is His. This is not new in Leviticus. Cain and Abel both brought a minchah, and there is endless speculation about why Abel's was received. It was not that Abel brought meat and Cain brought grain, because chapter 2 tells us grain is a proper tribute, so on that logic Cain should have been the accepted one. The better reading is that Abel handed it over as though it already belonged to God, and Cain was counting his own sweat. Do you know what I went through for this land. You sent the weeds. I know I owe You this, but You made it hard on me.

Then the chapter turns and says what may not come. No leaven and no honey, and salt every time, and the text says why: the salt of the covenant with your God. I can give you the mechanics, that leaven and honey ferment and salt preserves and the altar is not the place for what turns. I want to go under that. The reason is that God said so. We love to make everything make sense. I kept asking the commentaries what was evil about leaven, and concluded honey must be worthless and salt must be virtuous, and I would be lying to you if I preached that, because it is not what Scripture says. God is telling His people how an offering is prepared, and you follow what God says rather than what you say.

What we do instead is make our sincerity the standard. We have overindexed on it. People say their worship is sincere, that when they sing their heart is full and God can see it, and I keep noticing that Jesus barely talks that way. He says those who love Him keep His commands, and that His disciples do the will of His Father. It has nothing to do with feelings and everything to do with obedience. So we bring God a grain offering with leaven and honey worked into it and announce that it is sincere, and He is right to refuse it. And the refusal becomes the scandal. He is so mean, you brought Him your famous honey bread, what kind of God turns that down. He told us explicitly, no honey and no leaven, and you put in both. If He says no honey in the grain offering, there is no honey in the grain offering. When I say that I am told I am strict and legalistic, and I am not being legalistic, I am reading the Word. It is not even an inconvenience, because He grew the grain in the first place. If I am handing His gift back, am I going to hand it back the way I want or the way He asked.

Your command now is not to bring a grain offering. It is to partake in the grain offering already given, which is the body of Christ. Communion asks something of you,

that you confess and admit your own offering was never good enough, and that Christ's body is the offering God always receives. Having eaten, you are required to live in obedience. The list is short. Love God, love others. We prayed the Lord's Prayer this morning and I did not plan it, forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sinned against us, and it should make you uncomfortable, because forgiving does not feel good and I would rather keep what I am holding. That is exactly why it is an offering. Jesus said seventy times seven and we hear a figure of speech and settle on five. He receives His own Word back, and the Spirit supplies the strength.

Now put chapter 1 and chapter 3 side by side. Leviticus 1:4, he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Leviticus 3:2, he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. It reads like a duplication. The purpose is different. The burnt offering says you are atoned and you have the right to sit at the table. The peace offering says come and sit at the table. Israel's neighbors wanted their gods at a distance, because those gods were capricious and changed the terms whenever they liked. Israel is the strange one, wandering in the wilderness asking to dwell with God, and God does not tell them to figure out the fee. He gives them Leviticus and says, I am holy, and here is what it costs to sit with Me.

Ephesians 2:13. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, our shalom, who has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. When I read that now I see Leviticus. The blood that brings you near is the same blood thrown against the sides of an altar, and Jesus has not abolished it, He has fulfilled it, so the entrance is no longer an animal but the eternal blood of Christ.

Look at how the three offerings move: nobody eats the burnt offering, the priests eat the grain offering, everybody eats the peace offering, and by chapter 3 the one who sacrifices sits down and eats. Paul says the cup of blessing is a participation in the blood of Christ and the bread a participation in His body, and then reaches back and says those who ate the sacrifices in Israel were participants in the altar. He understood this system better than I ever will, and he says its whole point was that God's people would participate in worship and dwell with Him.

That is why I only preach Christ. Your sacrifices are never going to be good enough. I watch people spend years handing God their honey baked bread, expensive and laborious and refused, until they conclude He never accepted their hard work and reject a God who rejects them. I worry about that for you, and more for the youth and the kids. You partake in the sacrifice already given. He spent it all on the cross. So

communion is a celebration. I was a wretch and He loves me, enough to give His body and His blood, and this is the offering my God receives. I did not generate it. It is a gift.

We serve a holy God and I do not want you lowering the bar or thinking He will become convenient. We say we can worship wherever and however we are, and part of me says you are right. I am not shaming anyone who worships from home or cannot dress up. None of that makes worship acceptable. If an earthquake took this sanctuary down and we met in the field, God is not going to say it no longer counts. What matters is that we bring a proper sacrifice and clothe ourselves with the body and blood of Jesus, so He leads us into obedience. And obedience to a voice is freer than obedience to a list. You start moving in generosity you would not have chosen, and forgiveness you would not have chosen, because His ways are higher than ours. Through His body and blood you are the temple now, housing the Spirit, living as a sacrifice. He is the last sacrifice that will ever be needed, so live like it.

Blog

Leviticus opened up with the explanation regarding the burnt offering. The significance of the burnt offering was that the entire sacrifice was consumed by the fire, and the smoke that came from it was pleasing to the Lord, and no one would be able to eat the sacrifice. This week we read the next two chapters of Leviticus, and we learn that the grain offering in chapter 2 is eaten by the priests, and the peace offering in chapter 3 is eaten by the person who brought it. The first three chapters of Leviticus explain three different sacrifices, but the burnt offering, no one eats, the grain offering, the priests eat, and the peace offering, everyone eats. It is a progression that leads us from total surrender to a shared meal together.

Chapter 2 asks for fine flour, olive oil, and a little frankincense, which is to say the contents of an ordinary kitchen. No animal, no blood, no herd. The priest takes a handful, burns it on the altar, and the rest goes to Aaron and his sons for food. Chapter 1 already scaled its requirements so that a herdsman brought a bull and a poor man brought birds, and God said the same words of acceptance over both. Chapter 2 goes further down, to something every household in the camp already had on a shelf. There is nobody in Israel too poor to bring an offering.

The Hebrew word here is minchah, and it is worth knowing because it is not a religious word. It is a political one. A minchah is what a subject brings his king. Ehud carries one to Eglon of Moab, Jacob sends one ahead to Esau, and the nations bring them to Solomon. So an Israelite carrying flour to the tent of meeting was not making a donation, he was declaring allegiance. And everything about the offering says the same thing twice. The flour came from grain, the grain came out of a field, and the field was a gift from the God he was bringing it to. Nothing in his hands started with him. David prays exactly this much later, when Israel gives toward the temple, that all things come from God and that what they are giving is only what they have already received from His hand. Worship in Leviticus is return rather than contribution. We are not adding to God's holdings, we are admitting whose they were.

Then the chapter turns and starts saying what may not go on the altar, and this is where most of us stall. No leaven, and no honey. Both are good food. Leavened bread appears in other offerings, and honey is one of the two things the promised land is famous for. The best explanation is that both work by fermentation, the slow process of something turning, and the altar is not the place for what corrupts. Then comes the requirement, and it is not optional. Season all your grain offerings with salt, and do not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing. Salt is the opposite of leaven, since it preserves rather than ferments. Elsewhere in Scripture a covenant of salt means a permanent one, and in that world treaties were sometimes sealed over a shared salted

meal between the parties. So a handful of flour going onto the fire carried a small enacted promise that the relationship it served was not going to spoil.

Chapter 3 expands on how we are to approach our Lord. The fat and the blood belong to God. In their culture, the fat around the organs was the richest part of the animal, the part you would want, which is exactly why it is reserved. The blood is held back for a reason Leviticus gives us later, that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Then the chapter ends by pushing the rule past the sanctuary and into every house, a statute forever in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood. What God required at the altar followed the worshiper into his kitchen. There was no line where worship stopped and ordinary eating began.

Put those two pieces together and these chapters make a claim we tend to ignore or actively resist. God specifies how He is approached. Not everything offered sincerely is acceptable, and the difference is not how much the worshiper meant it. Something offered from a full heart on our own terms is still on our own terms. That claim gets sharp in two weeks, when Aaron's sons offer unauthorized fire and it costs them their lives, and it begins here, quietly, in a rule about bread.

Which brings us to the peace offering. The Hebrew is shelamim, built on the same root as shalom, and translations split between peace offering and fellowship offering because the word holds both. The procedure opens exactly like chapter 1. The worshiper lays his hand on the animal's head, kills it at the entrance of the tent, and the priests throw the blood against the sides of the altar. Fellowship with God never stops requiring a substitute. Then the chapter does something unique. It says nothing about atonement. Chapter 1 told us the offering would be accepted for him, to make atonement for him. Chapter 3 never says that it makes atonement. The blood is still shed and the death is still real, and the stated purpose has moved from getting right with God to being with Him.

The rest of the instructions come in chapter 7, and they describe a meal. The fat goes up on the altar, portions go to the priests, and the worshiper takes the rest and eats it in God's presence. A thanksgiving offering had to be eaten the same day, which means it could not be eaten alone, because one family cannot finish an animal before sundown. The rule made the meal communal by design. You brought your neighbors, and the offering turned into a party at God's house with God as the host. Chapter 7 lists the occasions for it, thanksgiving, a vow being paid, and a freewill gift, and all three are responses to something God has already done. The peace offering is never a request. It is what you bring when He has already acted.

That revises what most of us assume the sacrificial system was for. We picture it as machinery for managing guilt, a way of keeping the account square. These three

chapters tell a different story. The blood was shed so that a family could eat dinner in the presence of God without being destroyed. All of the cost was aimed at a table.

This is where Christ makes the whole thing legible. Paul tells the Ephesians that He Himself is our peace, and the thought reaches back into shalom. Jesus is not only the one who makes peace possible, He is the peace offering, and He is also the host. On the night He was betrayed He took bread and a cup and gave both away, and the meal He left us is bread and blood at one table. Paul says it plainly to the Corinthians, that the cup we bless is a participation in the blood of Christ, and that those who ate the sacrifices in Israel were participants in the altar. Communion is not a gesture we perform in His memory. It is us eating in the presence of God because the offering has already been made.

So when you come to the table, understand what is happening. You are not only being forgiven. You are being seated. And that changes what the rest of the week is for. The offering God asks for now is not a bull or a bag of flour, since the sacrifice has been made once for all, and the pattern of chapter 2 still holds. Bring Him what He already gave you. Your work, your income, your kitchen, your ordinary Tuesday, all of it grown in His field. Bring it on His terms rather than yours, preserved with the covenant rather than sweetened to taste. Then eat, and remember that the meal is not a reward for a good week. It is the reason the blood was shed.

Every one of these chapters ends up in the same place, and so does Scripture, at a supper where the Lamb is the host and the invitation has gone out much further than anyone expected. Read Leviticus 2 and 3 this week, and read Leviticus 7:11-18 alongside them so you can see the meal. Then come Sunday hungry.