

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

GOD DELIVERS

GOD THE LAWGIVER

Atonement Sacrifices (Part 1)

The book of Leviticus is a place we frequently get bogged down in our Bible reading. However, when we understand what is written there, it becomes a beautiful ‘picture book’ of the five sacrifices or offerings of the Old Testament foretelling our atonement by the death of Jesus. Atonement is defined as reconciliation or bringing together. Atonement is forgiveness of our sins through the shed blood of Christ. Christ made atonement for us because our sin separates us from God. Because of Christ’s atoning work on the cross and His victory over sin, if we so choose we can be brought together with God Himself! Although each sacrifice serves a slightly different purpose, together they provide a picture of atonement. One sacrifice was not enough to symbolize the work of our Lord. We will look at three this week and two next week.

Although sometimes referenced by different names, the five sacrifices are the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering.

The first need for a blood offering occurred when Adam and Eve sinned and saw themselves as they really were – naked and exposed. **Genesis 3:21 (ESV)** ²¹ *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.* It was necessary for animals to die to provide covering for their sin and shame.

When Noah and his family were delivered from the ark after the floodwaters subsided, Noah made a blood sacrifice. **Genesis 8:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ *Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.* In Noah’s thankfulness for his deliverance from the flood, he offered burnt offerings to the LORD. He gave the entire offering to Almighty God as his expression of gratitude.

From just these two events, we realize that the concept of blood sacrifices were not foreign to the Israelites. However, I suspect that living among the pagan Egyptians for 400 years caused them to forget the true need and meaning of these sacrifices. **Hebrews 9:22 (ESV)** ²² *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

I remember loving to look at pictures in my grandmother’s ‘old picture drawer’ seeing relatives of long ago and having her tell me their stories. We should be excited to look at the Old Testament pictures that point us to Christ revealing His story long before He came.

Offering 1 – The Burnt Offering – We need atonement to remove our guilt.

Read Leviticus 1:3-9 (ESV) ³ *“If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. 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.*

⁵ Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁶ Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, ⁷ and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; ⁹ but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

The burnt offering pictures Jesus' offering of Himself without spot to God for our atonement – that is the forgiveness of our sins. **John 1:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ The next day he [meaning John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

The animal for the burnt offering could be a young bull, lamb, or goat. However, **Leviticus 1:14** reveals turtledoves or young pigeons were also acceptable sacrifices for those who could not afford more. These sacrifices must all be without blemish picturing how we are to give our best to the LORD.

With the bloody sacrifices, the laying on of hands meant the worshiper was symbolically transferring sin and guilt to the animal who died in the place of the sinner.

The person bringing the sacrifice would kill it. The priest collected the blood. The ESV says the priest threw the blood on the sides of the bronze or brazen altar located at the entrance to the tabernacle. Other translations say the priests sprinkled the blood which to me is a better picture. I don't think the placing of the blood was helter-skelter. This blood represented the sealing of a covenant or promise to the people of Israel. Blood represents life. **Leviticus 17:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life... Its sprinkling on the altar represented a vital commitment between God and His people.

The worshiper cut up and skinned the animal giving the priest the animal's hide. If a bird was brought, the priest killed it but it was not skinned. I do want to point out that the quick slitting of the animal's throat at the tabernacle was much more humane than what our Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins. After the priest arranged the various parts on the altar, the entire animal or bird was burned as a sacrifice with the smoke going up to God as a pleasing aroma to Him.

There is often a disconnect for us today with our concept of the cross. We so often picture the cross as a beautiful piece of jewelry instead of the instrument of our Lord's death that it truly was.

Read Hebrews 9:12 (ESV) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

The ultimate fulfillment of the burnt offering is in Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cruel cross. Let's compare the pictures of the burnt offering to see how they foretold of the sacrifice of Jesus.

- The sacrifice of the burnt offering was completely consumed picturing how Jesus' physical life was completely consumed.

- The aroma of the burning offering foretold of how pleased the Father would be when the work of salvation was finished. **John 19:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ ... *Jesus ...said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.* The Father was satisfied with the finished work of His Son. It was sufficient to cover the sins of the world.
- The giving of the skins to the priests reminds us that Jesus' covering (*His garments*) was distributed to those who officiated over His sacrifice at the foot of the cross. **Matthew 27:35 (ESV)** ³⁵ *And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.*

The writer of Hebrews points out the most significant part of Jesus' sacrifice when he wrote: *he entered once for all.* Jesus does not have to keep sacrificing Himself over and over. There is no longer need for animal sacrifice – the blood of the Lamb has taken away the sins of the world. All we need to do is accept His sacrifice to redeem us from our sins. He died in our place!

Offering 2 – The Grain Offering – We need atonement to restore us to service.

Read Leviticus 2:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *"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 ² 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. ³ 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.*

The grain offering is sometimes called the meal or cereal offering. The King James Version refers to it as a meat offering which is a misnomer in our day because no meat is involved. There were five forms for the fine flour grain offering: oven-baked cakes, cakes baked in a pan, cakes baked in a frying pan or griddle, or crushed roasted heads of new grain. Wiersbe says that these cakes would resemble our modern baked pie crust or pizza dough. The officiating priest put only a portion of the offering on the altar—the *memorial portion* for the LORD which was consumed in the fire; and the rest of the offering went to the priests for their own personal use. Only the males in the priestly family could eat it, and they had to do it in the holy place of the tabernacle.

The grain offering is the only offering without blood. It pictures the sinless humanity of Jesus. And once again we see one of Jesus' I Am statements in this offering. **John 6:35 (ESV)** ³⁵ *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

The grain offering did not contain leaven since leaven is a picture of sin. Although the Son of God took on flesh, He died without sin. The grain sacrifice was mixed with oil. Oil represents the Holy Spirit indicating how the coming Messiah would be born into flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Oil was also poured on the offering picturing how the Holy Spirit would be poured upon the Messiah at His baptism.

The presence of salt in the offering reminds us of what Jesus said His followers should be. **Matthew 5:13 (NASB)** ¹³ *"You are the salt of the earth...*

Read John 12:24 (ESV) ²⁴ *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

Although not a blood offering, the grain offering beautifully represents how the Messiah's death was like a grain of wheat that dies in the earth for the purpose of bringing to life new fruit. Jesus' death brings new life.

Offering 3 – Peace Offering – We need atonement to reconcile us to God.

Read Leviticus 3:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *“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. ² 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. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.*

The peace offering also called the fellowship, thank, wave or heave offering and is a bloody sacrifice and the only sacrifice that the worshiper can personally eat with family and friends. This offering pictures not only our peace with God but peace with one another. The best portion (the fatty parts) were first burnt up giving the best to the LORD. The largest portion went to the priests as a means of providing for their needs.

The peace offering reflects the peace that comes between God and man because of the sacrifice of Jesus. He literally became our peace offering. Through His sacrifice He made peace or reconciliation between the Father and us. **Romans 5:1 (ESV)** ¹ *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This Old Testament offering pictures the One who would come to bring true peace to the hearts of mankind. Jesus said in **John 14:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you...*

Read Ephesians 2:13 (ESV) ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

About 20 BC, King Herod began a major restructuring of the Temple of Jerusalem. In addition to the areas reserved for the people of Israel, there was a space everyone could enter called the Court of the Gentiles. It was originally intended for non-Jews who wanted to worship the True God. That court was as close as they could get to the Holy Place. This court was way off to the side. Gentiles were permitted to come to the temple, but they were kept away far off. After the sacrificial death of Jesus -- all has changed. We who were without Christ; can now be in Christ. The distance and barriers which separated us from God Himself have been removed not by anything we have done but by the blood of the Lamb of God. Thank you Jesus!