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An Introduction To The Offerings

Introduction

I often thank God for His gracious consideration of the inability of our minds to comprehend deep spiritual truths and giving us little object lessons from creation. The “Offerings” are one of God’s great object lessons dealing with the sacrifice of the Lord for the maintaining of our fellowship with God. Like a searchlight focused on a particular aspect of the Lord, the parts and ingredients of the offerings illuminate a feature of the Lord’s person, passion, or glory that we could easily miss.

When there is ministry on the offerings, that which is generally meant is the five offerings of Leviticus chapters one to six, however, these are not the only offerings. In these chapters of Leviticus God gives instructions concerning the Burnt Offering (ch. 1:2-17); the Meat Offering (but in fact a “meal” offering since its main ingredient was flour) (ch. 2:1-16); the Peace Offering (ch. 3:1-17); the Sin Offering for sins committed through ignorance (ch. 4:1-35); and the Trespass Offering (chs. 5:1-6:7). Added to these was the Drink Offering (Gen. 35:14); the Wave Offering (Ex. 29:24); the Heave Offering (Ex. 29:27); the offerings for the consecration of the priests (Ex. 29:22); and the Red Heifer Offering (Num. 19:2-22). While these are not all the offerings, they are the major ones, and each of them presenting a different aspect of the sacrifice of the Lord.

The offerings, in conjunction with the Tabernacle are called “shadows” (Heb. 10:1), and there are a number of features about a shadow that must be appreciated. The scriptures emphasize to us that they are: “not the very image of the things” (Heb. 10:1), so while they are pointers, they are not perfect. For instance, it required the five offerings presented in twenty-five different ways (see note 5) to portray the single sacrifice of the Lord, and even they were not sufficient. There will always be depths in the person and work of the Lord that no earthly picture or pictures can convey.

The sacrifices taught the Israelites and the same lessons we can learn concerning the Lord and His work:

- a) They learnt the seriousness of sin and the cost for forgiveness and reconciliation. Sin could never be afforded to be taken lightly, for if they desired fellowship with God it came at a heavy price. Paul wrote: “The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and the Israelites had to learn that for their cleansing a perfect animal had to be slain, then consumed on the altar, and gone forever. What a cost to them personally. In the mercy of God we do not personally pay sins penalty, for the Son of God paid the debt for us. As we enter into what it meant for Him to suffer on Calvary in those hours of darkness, then we begin to learn the seriousness of sin and the price which had to be paid for our forgiveness and reconciliation.
- b) How to have a deeper more personal fellowship with God. That is, the more they kept to His laws, and in reality entered into the truth of the sacrifices and altar, the closer they walked with God. The open evidence of sin was in the sacrificing at another altar, for it was a mark of idolatry. “And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it.” (Jud. 6:25; 1 Kgs. 18:26)
- c) The foremost external method for showing repentance. If an Israelite sinned and it did not grieve the individual, offering an animal would be neglected or an imperfect animal would be offered (Mal. 1:8, 13), something God would not accept, neither did it show any genuine repentance.
- d) The seriousness of making a vow, for when a vow was made it was accompanied with a sacrifice (Lev. 7:16; 1 Sam. 1:21), this was not just a verbal declaration, it was a covenant until death. Many of us have made a covenant with God when we were baptized for we declared we were dead to the world and alive to God (Rom. 6:3-10). Furthermore, on Sundays many of us remember the Lord by the drinking from the cup and it is a remembrance of the new covenant in His blood. When we function in these ways we are making or endorsing a vow ratified by the Blood of the Lord.

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- e) A lovely way to show their gratitude to God (2 Chron. 29:31; 33:16)
- f) How to approach God and have acceptability with Him (Lev. 1:2-4)
- g) The centrality and relevance of the altar in every aspect of life, ceremonial, family, or national life revolved around the altar.
- h) When it came to approaching or maintaining fellowship with God what they thought was irrelevant, for the commands were from the God of Sinai. (Lev. 7:38; 8:21; 9:7)
- i) The distinctiveness and the glory of God, He was far removed from them and there was no place for casualness when speaking to, (He is the Lord) or functioning for Him (Lev. 10:1-2)

The Background of The People Who Offered The Sacrifices

I am aware that at times it is taught that the offerings foreshadowed the Lord and His suffering for the sinner for salvation. This is not the interpretation but an application. The Israelites were a people already redeemed by the shedding of blood (Ex. 12:7, 13, 22), and delivered by the power of God as the Man of war (Ex. 14:17, 24-31). Thus, they prefigured we who are redeemed and delivered from the power of sin and Satan (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 7:6; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:10). After their redemption and deliverance they began their wilderness journey and were separated from the influences of Egypt intellectually, ceremoniously, emotionally, spiritually, and brought into a covenant relationship with God (Ex. 19:4-8). Having ratified the covenant (Heb. 9:19) and provided a dwelling place for God (Ex. 27:1-40:38), the Lord commanded them how to approach and maintain fellowship with Him (Lev. 1-6).

The Creatures Or Materials Used For The Various Offerings

When it came to the offerings of the Lord foreshadowing the person and sacrifice of the Lord, God is very jealous that there is no inference of casualness, or man's ideas injected into them. All had to be done according to His commands and were never to be copied from the nations around them. Had the sacrifice not been according to God's commands, it would not have been accepted? It was He who determined the sort of animal, whether it was male, female, or optional; how much of an ingredient was optional; or if it was dependent on the size of the priest's hand (Lev. 2:2). The sacrifices, that is the types of sacrifice were divinely chosen sacrifices, declaring how man could approach Him.

God Specified The Sort of Offering

Offerings	These Offerings Could Be
Burnt Offering	A bull (Lev. 1:5); sheep or goat (Lev. 1:10); turtledove or pigeon (Lev. 1:14)
Meal Offering	Raw ingredients of flour frankincense oil salt (Lev. 2:1, 13); cakes baked in an oven, griddle, or frying pan (Lev. 2:4-7); wafers baked in an oven (Lev. 2:4); or green ears of corn dried by the fire and beaten out (Lev. 2:14)
Peace Offering	A bull or heifer (Lev. 3:1); a lamb, male or female (Lev. 3:6); a goat, male or female (Lev. 3:6)

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Offerings	These Offerings Could Be
Sin Offering	A bull (Lev. 4:3); a male kid of the goats (v.23); a female kid of the goats, a female lamb (v.32)
Trespass Offering	A female lamb or kid of the goats (Lev. 5:6); turtledoves or pigeons (Lev. 5:7); 1/10 part of an ephah of fine flour (Lev. 5:11); a ram (Lev. 5:15); plus 1/5th for the damage done (Lev. 5:16)
Drink Offering	1/4th, 1/3 rd , 1/2 of a hin of oil or wine (Num. 15:4-5; 28:14); 1/6 th (Ezek. 4:11)
Red Heifer	It could only be a heifer (Num. 19:2)
Consecration of the Priests	A ram (Ex. 29:22)
Wood Offering	Neh. 10:34; 13:31
Thank Offering	2 Chron. 29:31

It will be observed that some required an animal being killed and was therefore a blood offering, and with others there was no slaying, as in the drink or meal offerings.

There was a moral obligation on the individual to offer a sacrifice according to their ability. It would have been morally wrong for an individual who was very wealthy, with much livestock, to offer turtledoves, and just as wrong to expect a poor person to offer a goat. God is very understanding, therefore, pigeons were used by people who could not afford the more expensive animals (Lev. 5:7; 12:8) and to serve as lesser sin offerings. Both male and female cattle could be offered (Lev. 3:1-6), but among the sheep and goats special prominence was given to the male animal (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 1:10). The animal had to be at least eight days old (Lev. 22:27; Ex. 22:30), although sheep and goats were usually offered when a year old (Ex. 29:38; Lev. 9:3), and the heifer Abraham offered was three years old (Gen. 15:9).

The Restrictions On The Offerings

- 1) God was just as particular about what could be offered as He was about what could not be offered or put on the altar. In reviewing the negatives of the sacrifices God was emphatic that there was to be no blemish in the sacrifice. Each sacrifice had not only to be from the clean animals, but they had to be without spot, blemish, ill blemish (Deut. 15:21), or ever have borne a yoke (Num. 19:2); and if a bird its crop and feathers were taken off and cast aside (Lev. 1:16). If it was a meal offering it had to be without honey or leaven (Lev. 2:11). God will not tolerate any tint of apparent moral inferiority in Christ. He did no sin (1 Pet. 2:22); He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21); He is without sin (Heb. 4:15); and in Him is no sin (1 Jn. 3:5). The Lord was holy in His birth (Lk. 1:35); in death (Acts 2:27); and in glorification (Heb. 7:26). God's love for His Son will not tolerate any erroneous inference toward Him.
- 2) Do not leave the fat of any sacrifice until the morning. (Ex. 23:18)
- 3) Do not boil (seethe) a kid sacrifice in his mother's milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21). This could refer to a superstitious harvest custom in which a kid boiled in its mother's milk was used to propitiate gods and sprinkled on crops as a charm to increase production the coming year.

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The Words Used For “Burn”

God was also very particular about the words used for the consuming of the sacrifice, using five different words which are:

Reference	Word	Meaning within the context of the Offerings
Lev. 1:9	Qatar	To cause the smoke to ascend as vapor of incense
Lev. 2:12	Alah	To ascend as a flame of fire
Lev. 4:21	Saraph	To burn, to consume, to burn completely
Lev. 6:9	Mowqed	To burn as a common oven, burning slow and steady
Lev. 6:12	Ba ar	To consume with fire

The Contrast of The Old Testament Sacrifices And The Sacrifice of The Lord

There can be no doubt that the sacrifices of the old economy were glorious shadows yet they were inadequate in a number of ways. The following table tabulates some of the ways they were not pleasing and satisfying to God.

The Old Testament Sacrifices	The Sacrifice of the Lord
Continual (Heb. 10:1)	Once for all (Heb. 10:12)
Incapability to cleanse the conscience only purifying the flesh (Heb. 9:13)	Can cleanse the conscience (Heb. 10:2)
The way into God was not open for all (Heb. 9:8)	The way into the Holiest is open for all (Heb. 4:16)
Brought sins to remembrance (Heb. 10:3)	Put away sin (Heb. 9:26) sanctified by the offering of the body of Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10)
Provided atonement (Ex. 29:36)	Provided cleansing (1 Jn. 1:7)
Ratified a covenant which was faulty (Heb. 8:7)	Ratified a better covenant (Heb. 8:6)
The priest entered by virtue of the blood of animals (Heb. 9:12)	Christ entered by Heaven by virtue of His own blood (Heb. 9:12)
Could never take away sins (Heb. 10:4, 11)	One sacrifice (Heb. 10:12)

Thank God for the finished work of Christ, and that today:

- a) Instead of having the shadows, we have the substance
- b) Instead of the types, we have the true
- c) Instead of the temporary, we have an eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9); eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12); and daily move on to our eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

. . . . Rowan Jennings