

Leviticus 1 | Sunday February 23, 2025

As God calls out to Moses from the tabernacle, He starts by instructing Moses on the 3 most common types of offerings, **the whole burnt offering** (Ch. 1), **the grain offering** (Ch.2), and **the peace offering** (Ch. 3). These three are linked because they have a pleasing aroma to God. The whole burnt offering is the oldest offering, it is even given by Noah (Gen 8:20).

Leviticus 1:1-17 ESV

(1) The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, (2) “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock. (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. (10) “If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, (11) and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. (12) And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, (13) but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (14) “If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. (15) And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. (16) He shall remove its crop with its contents and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. (17) He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

The book of Leviticus is not presented how we would do it using a western worldview. There is a lot of repetition, and things will seem out of order to us. A Jewish mindset processed information differently than we do. It would make sense to us to start describing the offerings **in chronological order**, meaning the order they should be given. Instead, they are presented **in order of frequency and grouped by similarities**. This first offering is the whole burnt offering, and literally means “that which ascends.” For other offerings the priest will be allowed to eat some of the animal and at times even the person giving the offering partakes in the meal. What makes the whole burnt offering so unique is that the entire animal is burnt on the altar and all ascends into smoke.

Leviticus 1:2-3 ESV

- (2) “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering **of livestock from the herd or from the flock.**
- (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.

These instructions are coming from God and are going to systematically point to the one true sacrifice, Jesus. In each of these offerings there will be similarities, from presenting the offering and laying hands to the killing of the animal. Then there will be differences to what happens with the meat, and what is done with the blood. **Each of these details is intentional and will reveal to us Jesus.** The offering had to be without blemish, and so did Jesus. The animal was a herbivore. **Carnivores were not offered because something that takes life could not be a picture of the life giving Jesus.** It had to come from the herd, meaning it could not be a wild animal. This added to the cost of the offering.

2 Samuel 24:24 ESV

- (24) But the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will buy it from you for a price. **I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.**” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

The offering could not be free it had to have a cost associated with it. This may seem odd to us when salvation is freely given to us. What we can forget is the **cost Jesus had to pay** in order to make salvation free.

Romans 6:23 ESV

- (23) **For the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin was not forgotten or ignored, its punishment was fully taken by Jesus. This is the only way humanity could be accepted in front of God. The cost of sin will be a theme that we will not be able to get away from through the entire book of Leviticus. From the financial cost of the offering to the death of the animal, **each offering was costly.**

Leviticus 1:3-4 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.**

When you wanted to worship God with a whole burnt offering, you had to take the animal to the entrance of the tent of meeting. Then you laid your hand onto the head of the animal. The word for lay is more intense and can **mean to lean heavy upon, press unto.** As you gave this sacrifice you leaned on the animal to show an ownership and also to recognize it as a substitute. The owner leaned on the animal in recognition that they were the one who deserved to die and be burned on the altar. The person offering the sacrifice was recognizing what lied heavy on them as a sinner.

Psalms 88:7 ESV

- (7) **Your wrath lies heavy upon me**, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah

This is the same word, they were symbolically laying God's wrath that stood against them onto the animal. This was to make atonement for them. This word **atonement** has a few different emphasis that we will see throughout Leviticus but in its simplest form it means to cover.

Genesis 6:14 ESV

(14) Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and **cover it** inside and out with pitch.

The wood of the ark needed to be covered, or atoned. The wood could not be exposed to the water but needed something to protect it by covering it up. The animal was burnt up instead of the person. **In effect the person was covered by the animal's death.** The various offerings will shed more light on this concept of atonement. The whole burnt offering was not done yet, the person offering it and the priest still had a lot to do.

Leviticus 1:5-9 ESV

(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.**

Notice how specific the instructions are on who does what. Aaron's sons the priests were responsible to throw the blood on the sides of the altar, arrange the fire and arrange the pieces of the offering. The person giving the offering is responsible to kill the animal, skin it, cut it up and clean out the entrails. The person giving the offering was directly involved in the death and processing of the offering. **Death could not be minimized or ignored as you worshiped God with a burnt offering.**

Notice that the blood is not emphasized, in other offerings it will be. In the sin offering, and during the day of atonement a lot more will happen with the blood of the animal. In Leviticus 16, on the day of atonement the sin offering for the priest and then for the people are given first. **Then after the sin offering comes the burnt offering.** Other offerings will point to Jesus' blood payment on the cross or the peace that it secured. The burnt offering's significance comes in the full offering of the animal. As the instructions are repeated for a sheep/ goat and a bird the emphasis can be seen.

Leviticus 1:13; 17 ESV

(13) but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest **shall offer all of it** and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, **a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.**

(17) He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest **shall burn it** on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. **It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.**

The entire animal was to be burnt up, all of it was to be offered and was a pleasing aroma to God. It points to the perfect and complete obedience and surrendering Jesus to God the Father. He fully gave of Himself to the Father. His life was the pleasing aroma to God.

Hebrews 10:5-14 ESV

(5) Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, **but a body have You prepared for Me;**

(6) **in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure.**

(7) Then I said, ‘**Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God,** as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.’”

(8) When He said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law),

(9) then He added, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

(10) And by that will we have been sanctified **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

Jesus fully gave of Himself; He gave all His body. He walked in a perfect sinless obedience to God the Father. Nothing was held back in the whole burnt offering and Jesus held nothing back. He gave all in a holy obedience. **His heart was obedient to the Father and He made the offering out of that heart.** This is what the Israelites failed to see in practicing the whole burnt offering.

Jeremiah 14:10-12 ESV

(10) Thus says the LORD concerning this people: “**They have loved to wander** thus; they have not restrained their feet; **therefore the LORD does not accept them;** now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.”

(11) The LORD said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people.

(12) Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and **though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them.** But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.”

Israel thought they could make a ritual out of these sacrifices. That God was providing a list to follow and He would be pleased as long as the rituals were done correctly. They were wandering and walking away from God. **They were trying to keep the religious actions without the heart.** God would not accept this. David understood the heart's role.

Psalms 51:16-19 ESV

(16) For You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; **You will not be pleased with a burnt offering.**

(17) The sacrifices of God **are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart,** O God, You will not despise.

(18) Do good to Zion in Your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;

(19) **then will You delight in right sacrifices,** in burnt offerings and **whole burnt offerings;** then bulls will be offered on your altar.

God delights in the burnt offering once the heart is broken and worshipping Him. The whole burnt offering speaks of a heart responding to God out of worship and offering all to Him. **Worship cannot be divorced from the heart.** Jesus was accepted as the whole burnt offering because He walked in perfect heartfelt obedience. David understood the heart attitude God desired, then the

burnt offering could be given. A broken heart lays heavy on the animal and sees it should be them dying. **We are called to worship God in response and give our life, that we don't deserve, to Him.**

Hebrews 13:15-16 NAS95

(15) **Through Him** then, let us continually offer **up a sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, **the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**

(16) And do not neglect doing good and sharing, **for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**

We are called as believers to praise God and give Him thanks. **Our life is to given in worship to God in response to what Jesus has done.** This is possible through Him. Our worship and thanksgiving is a fruit. It should come from a heart that is amazed at Jesus. Too many people try to focus on the actions and leave the heart out. **When we leave the heart out the whole burnt offering is turned into emphasizing all that you need to do for God and all you need to give Him.** Instead of a life of worship in response to God. Psalm 50 summarizes this difference. It is written by Asaph who was a leader in worship at the tabernacle and eventually temple. He watched many offering be given and God gave Him tremendous insight as to what was truly important.

Psalm 50:7-8; 10; 12-17;23 ESV

(7) "Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God.

(8) **Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before Me.**

(10) **For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.**

(12) **"If I were hungry, I would not tell you,** for the world and its fullness are Mine.

(13) Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

(14) **Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,** and perform your vows to the Most High,

(15) and **call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you,** and you shall glorify Me."

(16) But **to the wicked** God says: **"What right have you to recite My statutes or take My covenant on your lips?**

(17) **For you hate discipline, and you cast My words behind you.**

(23) **The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies Me;** to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!"

God does not need us. He did not need the burnt offerings of Israel. This offering was not to feed Him as some of the other religions of the day thought. God desires a heart relationship with us. He wants us to give a sacrifice of thanksgiving. For us to be in love with Him and to call on Him in our needs. He wants to walk with us. **As believers we have been given the opportunity to give ourself fully to Him.** Our sin gets in the way of our fellowship with Him. Our selfishness, and lust pulls us away from the closeness He desires. We end up despising His discipline and we ignore the Word. The great news is that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. We can continually walk fresh with God and keep offering up thanksgiving for all He has done for us.

1 John 1:6 & 9 ESV

(6) If we say we have **fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie** and do not practice the truth.

(9) **If we confess our sins,** He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins **and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**
