

# **The Burnt Offering**

## Leviticus 3

### **Samuel Ridout**

online: 13.05.2024, updated: 13.05.2024

© SoundWords 2000–2024. All rights reserved.

All articles are for private use only. They can also be distributed privately without demand. Commercial reproductions of any kind are prohibited. Publications on other internet pages are only possible after consultation.

---

## **The foundation of all approach to God – the sacrifices.**

At the beginning of the second part of Genesis, which recounts the history of God's dealing with His people, we have the sacrifice of Abel, evidently furnishing the example for his successors, as we saw for instance in Noah, and later in Abraham. Similarly, in the book of Exodus, the sacrifice of the passover lamb is at the beginning of their whole redemption history. In Leviticus, the entire first division of the book is devoted to this subject, enlarging that of which partial views are given in the earlier books.

We see here the prominent place occupied by sacrifice in the mind of God. There is perhaps in no other portion of Scripture so full and detailed a description of this great fundamental necessity. It is, of course, the one perfect sacrifice of Christ which is typified throughout. He was the antitype of Abel's offering, of Noah's burnt sacrifice and of Abraham's. He was the true Passover Lamb whose blood was shed for us, and His sacrifice alone is set forth in all its varied aspects, perfections and adaptations as we have it here. There is, of course, no direct doctrinal teaching. All is in the language of shadow and type; this does not mean that there is inaccuracy of detail however, or that we cannot glean precious truth from every element of what God puts before us in the type. This will appear as we take up each of the different sacrifices.

There are five of these offerings, one of which, however, the meat offering, is not an animal sacrifice, and is always considered in conjunction with the burnt offering: "The burnt offering and its meat offering." These have been divided into two general classes, called the "sweet savor" and the "sin offerings." In the first, the thought prominent is of God being glorified through the death of Christ; in the second, of sin being met.

### **The Burnt Offering (Lev 1).**

We saw in the provision for the tabernacle that God began with the ark, symbolic of His throne so here the sacrifices begin with that which is more directly connected with God Himself and His acceptance of the work of Christ. The burnt offering was the chief of the sweet savor sacrifices, being offered up completely to God, and going up in all its savor to Him. Primarily, it was wholly for Him, although the offerer could see in it the measure of his own acceptance. It typified Him who offered Himself to God for a sacrifice, "a sweet smelling savor." It gives us that aspect of the death of Christ in which He is seen in the full obedience of a love which would glorify His Father in all things, presenting Himself in death to God. There would, of course, have been no possibility, no necessity for this apart from our sin. Therefore it was with reference to sin that the offering was made, and yet sin is not directly spoken of in it, but the devotion of a love strong as death. Thus the measure of Christ's obedience was "unto death."

There were three classes of the burnt offering, giving us three aspects of the death of our Lord in thus offering Himself to God. The offering could be of the herd, a bullock; of the flock, a lamb or goat; of birds, a dove.

The bullock suggests the full strength of a service which spent itself even unto death. The lamb or ram of the flock suggests not so much the strength, but the complete yieldingness

which marked our blessed Lord, who was “led as a lamb to the slaughter;” while the bird speaks rather of His heavenly character, “the Son of Man who is in heaven,” One who came down to do the will of God through the offering up of His body once for all.”

This last aspect of the sacrifice of our Lord, while in some sense higher than either of the other two, is from this very fact, necessarily not capable of such complete analysis as the other two kinds of burnt offering. There were certain details common to both the sacrifice from the herd and that from the flock. Each one unquestionably has its fulfilment in Christ. The offering was to be a male, suggesting headship, responsibility and strength. It was to be of the first year, in all the vigor of a life in which there was no sign of decrepitude or of hardness. It was to be “without blemish,” for that which typifies the Son of God must emphasize the fact of His absolute and intrinsic holiness.

The offerer laid his hand on the head of the the victim, thus identifying himself with it, and henceforth all that the victim passed through was as his substitute. Faith, of course, is the identification of the sinner with Christ, who thereafter takes the place of the offerer, both in the sufferings through which He passes and in the infinite sweet savor of His sacrifice before God. The animal is then slain, for death must come in. No dedication to God, no perfection of personal obedience on the part of Christ could set aside the awful fact that sin had made an impassable separation, and if this chasm were to be bridged, it must be by the bearing of the identical penalty which the sinner deserved.

The blood is then sprinkled upon the altar, in token of God’s acceptance of the sacrifice which has been presented to Him. The animal is flayed, its outer covering removed, just as our Lord’s inmost motives were laid bare before the holy eye of God in His cross. The pieces were then laid in order upon the altar. There was to be no confusion here. The head, the fat, the inwards, the legs, were all distinguished the one from the other. The sacrifice was divided into its parts. No mutilation was to take place – “a bone of Him shall not be broken,” but everything was distinguished. Its head, the thoughts, which were only those of obedience; the legs, the walk; the inwards, the affections, desires and secret motives, all were discerned and recognized by God, who could find nothing but that which perfectly glorified His every attribute in each department of our Lord’s life.

The washing of the inwards and legs with water suggests that perfect testing of all things by the word of God to which our Lord was subjected. At death, all had to be done “that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” There is no intimation that these parts *needed* cleansing – none in the Antitype, of course, for all was essentially pure; but our Lord ever subjected Himself to the fullest tests of the holy word of God, thus proving that “in Him was no sin.”

All was then burnt with fire upon the altar; the fire of divine holiness consuming completely the sacrifice. So our Lord not merely presented Himself to God, but in His death the fire of righteous judgment consumed all; all went up in eternal fragrance unto God, declaring forever that His beloved Son had in Him absolutely nothing that was not perfectly glorifying to infinite holiness, righteousness, wisdom, truth and love.

In a similar way the offering from the flock was treated. It is notable that the fat is particularly

spoken of in each of these, typical of that energy of the will which in man is so often arrayed against God – “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked” – but which in our Lord was willingly yielded up to God in death.

In the sacrifice of the bird, as has been said, we have not the dividing of the offering into its parts. All that would be in any way suggestive of earthly food or connection was first removed, that the type might thus speak exclusively of Him who came down from heaven. The bird was partly cloven, as laying bare its inward parts, but not divided, for the reason already suggested. Its blood was pressed out against the side of the altar. How wondrous to think of Him, every drop of whose blood coursed through His veins for His Father’s glory, having all wrung from Him at the cross; still, however, infinitely acceptable – never more so to the One who had laid upon Him this great work to be accomplished!

Two points of the compass are mentioned in connection with the burnt offering which it may be well to notice, as details, every detail, should have a voice for us. The offering from the flock had to be killed on the side of the altar “northward before the Lord.” The north is literally “the hidden,” as being that part of the sky in which the sun is not directly visible. It is thus in contrast with the south, which always lies under the full rays of the sun. It suggests the withdrawal of the light which we find at the cross. It is not emphasized here by absolute darkness, but shows that judicial feature of our Lord’s death which could not be lacking even in the burnt offering. In the offering of the bird, the crop is put with the ashes on the east side of the altar, the side nearest the gate, for the tabernacle faced eastward. The ashes are the witness that the fire has done its work completely.<sup>1</sup>

In the 20th psalm, suggestively near to the great sacrificial 22nd (the sin offering psalm) we have the expression, “Remember all thine offerings and accept thy burnt sacrifice.” The word “accept” is, literally, “turn to ashes.” Here, also, the word for “ashes” is a peculiar one, different from the suggestion of barrenness in the ordinary word, as for instance, “He feedeth on ashes – a deceived soul.” In connection with the sacrifice the word is really “fat ashes” – suggesting the richness of that of which they speak. In looking upon the ashes, one could say, “The fire has fully done its work” so in looking upon the death of our blessed Lord, we can say, All is finished divine justice can ask no more; therefore, fittingly, this witness of a perfect work is placed on the east side of the altar, toward the sun rising, suggesting that nothing remains now after the cross but our Lord’s resurrection, which is also the dawning of a new eternal day for all who avail themselves of the infinite value of His finished work.

When we come to speak of the sin offering we shall find that special emphasis is laid upon the different grades, a distinction of which we have not spoken directly in the burnt offering, although there is an evident gradation in the sacrifices from the bullock down to the bird. The bullock is in one sense the chief, superior in many ways to the lamb, which in its turn exceeds the bird in value. Thus while each aspect of the death of Christ is perfect in itself, and has a preciousness all its own which must not be allowed to suffer by comparison with some other aspect, yet there is a gradation in order, suggesting the kind of apprehension in the offerer corresponding to the aspect of each class of sacrifice. A full measure of apprehension will include all three classes of these sacrifices.

Extract from “Division 1 (Lev 1–7)” in Part II: “Chapter 3: Leviticus” in *The Pentateuch*, New York (Loizeaux Brothers)  
1946

[www.stempublishing.com](http://www.stempublishing.com)

## Footnotes

[1] The reader is referred to the Notes in the Numerical Bible for a somewhat different view as to both the washing of the bullock and lamb, and the removal of the crop from the bird. These are considered as necessary for the removal of whatever would not be a type of our Lord. There is much in this view to commend it, but there seems a difficulty in the thought of thus preparing a type to be really that. The washing of the legs and inwards seems to yield a consistent meaning as we have indicated; the removal of the crop, as also explained, may suggest the link with earth – the earth-life of our Lord from which He was separated by the very act of laying down His life. But we do not wish to press our thought unduly.