

LEVITICUS 1:2-17

RITUALS

- “The New Testament teaches that Jesus came to fulfill the atonement taught in the Old Testament law (Matt. 5:17). That means the rituals of the law should no longer be practiced (Heb. 8:13, 10:1), but it also means we can gain insight into Christ’s work by studying those rituals (Lk. 24:27). The OT law is like the blueprints of a building: once the building is finished, its blueprints are no longer needed, but they are still useful for understanding the finished product. When we study these ‘blueprints’ of atonement, we explore the riches of what Christ came to fulfill.” ~ LeFebvre, Packer
- “Ritual is ‘acted theology’.” ~ LeFebvre, Packer
- “Rituals are prescribed actions whereby the OT people of God expressed and passed on what they believed about sin and atonement.” ~ LeFebvre, Packer
- “Rituals: physical exercises given to teach spiritual truths.” ~ McGee
- Like some people in churches today, Jewish worshippers could merely go through the motions at the altar without putting their heart into it, but this meant that God had not truly forgiven them.
 - Psalm 50 and Is. 1:10-20 discuss those who offer sacrifices but don’t change their behavior. It’s those who truly repent that receive salvation.
 - Mic. 6:6-8 states that the Lord is more pleased with obedience than a thousand rams for sacrifice. Remember, God prefers obedience to sacrifice – 1 Sam. 15:22

SCRIPTURE

V. 2-3 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any one of you ¹ brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock ²—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice ³ of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish ⁴; he shall offer it of his own free will ⁵ at the door ⁶ of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD.’”

1. Any one of you

- Hebrew ‘*ādām* (*ah-dahm*): a human being
- No one is excluded. Whosoever will, may come.
- McGee writes “None are excluded except those who exclude themselves.”
- John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

2. Of the Livestock

- This indicates that the sacrifice had to be your own domesticated animal you raised.
- No wild animals as it would not have value to you if you just went out and hunted it that day.
- Older than 8 days but still in the prime of life
 - Has value to the giver, (Lev. 9:3, 12:6, Num 28:3)
- No carnivorous, had to be a plant eater. Wiersbe states, “Animals that live by slaying others could never reveal Christ who gave life, and never took it.”

- “A further restriction was that the animal must be a clean animal and it must be domesticated. It could not be taken in the hunt. Only that which was valuable dear to the owner could be offered because it prefigures Christ. God spared not His own Son. Christ suffered on the cross, but the Father suffered in heaven. The final restriction reveals that the animal was one that was obedient to man...Christ was the obedient servant. He came to serve and was obedient unto death.” ~ McGee

3. Burnt Sacrifice

- The burnt sacrifice is the oldest of the accepted sacrifices.
 - Abel offered a burnt sacrifice in Genesis 4:4
 - Noah offered a burnt sacrifice in Genesis 8:20-21
 - Abraham offered a burnt sacrifice in Genesis 22:13-14
- The word for burnt sacrifice is Hebrew *’ōlā* (o-lah)
 - It literally means to “ascend” or “go up”. The idea is that it is a sacrifice that goes up to God. It is wholly consumed, only the aroma and ashes remain. This is a picture of what our sacrifice and surrender should look like. We should be wholly given over to God. If only ashes remain, God can bring beauty from them (Is. 6:13). “The rising of the smoke suggested that the real essence of the victim was ascending to the presence of God, who smelled its savor and was satisfied in the act of sacrifice.” ~ Merrill

4. Male without blemish

- 1 Peter 1:18-20 (NIV) “*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*”
- Rev. 13:8 “*All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*”
- Heb. 4:15 “*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*”

5. Given out of your own free will

- God will not force his forgiveness and love on you. If you don’t want it, He will respect that decision. Even it means you spend eternity separated from Him. You don’t have to come to Christ, unless you want to be saved.
- 2 Cor. 9:7 “*You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.*” (NLT)

6. At the door

- Notice that you offer the sacrifice at the door. The average person cannot go into the tabernacle, including Moses as he was not a priest. Our righteousness is as filthy rags (Is. 64:6) so only the priest can be inside. Standing at the door means it is a public act. Anyone walking by can see you.
- “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*” John 10:9
- “*Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*” Matt. 10:32

V. 4 “Then he shall **put his hand on the head**¹ of the burnt offering, and it will be **accepted**² on his behalf to make **atonement**³ for him.”

1. **Put his hand on the head**

- Placing the hand on the head denotes Confession, Designation, and Transference.
 - Confession: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Rom. 10:9-10
 - Designation: “When the man went in and put his hand on the head of the little animal that was to be slain, he was designating this little animal to take his place. The man was confessing that he deserved to die.” ~ McGee
 - Transference: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21
 - “The laying on of hands meant the worshipper was symbolically transferring sin and guilt to the animal who died in place of the sinner.” ~ Wiersbe
 - According to Matthew Henry, Jewish doctors say the person “must put both his hands with all his might, between the horns of the beast.” (V. 1-9 are specifically speaking of cattle.)

2. **Accepted**

- There is a promise that God WILL accept you if you do what He says.
- Hebrew *rāṣâ* (raw-tsaw): to be pleased with, to accept with favor, to satisfy a debt, delighted.
- God not only accepts it but is pleased and delighted with the fact that you want to reconcile with Him.

3. **Atonement**

- “The process of atonement is too rich for just one kind of sacrifice to represent it, so Leviticus appoints five sacrifice rituals to express different aspects of the singular work of atonement.” ~ LeFebvre, Packer
- Hebrew *kaphar* – to cover (Heb. 10:4)
- Covering for a temporary forbearance (Rom. 3:25). God saved on credit in the OT.
- “To make a true atonement for sins, the blood of a spotless animal must be shed, thereby anticipating the eventual offering of the sinless blood of the Lamb of God as a once-for-all offering for the sin of the world.” (Jn. 1:29, 1 Pt. 1:18-20, Heb. 10:10, Rev. 13:8)
- Returning to at-one-ment w/ God.
- “Leviticus teaches that the way to God is by sacrifice. The word atonement occurs 45x in this book.”

V. 5-6 “**He shall kill**¹ the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall bring the blood and **sprinkle the blood**² all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.”

1. **He shall kill**

- Notice who does the killing. The priests don’t kill the sacrifice for the offender. The person has to perform the killing action themselves.
- Think of Abraham and Isaac.

2. **Sprinkle the blood**

- “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” Lev. 17:11

V. 7-9 “The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire. Then the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar ¹; but he shall wash its entrails and its legs ² with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma ³ to the LORD.”

1. Fire on the altar

- Fire can be destructive but in and of itself, it is not a bad thing. “Fire here does not represent God’s wrath. It represents the purifying energy and power of God... Fire does not always destroy, it also cleanses and consumes. The nature of the object on fire determines the outcome.” ~ McGee. (Fire hardens clay, but melts wax.)
- The fire consumes the sacrifice, just as we are to be consumed by God. Deut. 4:24 says, “For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Our whole selves need to be given over to Him.

2. Wash the entrails and legs

- This represents a cleansing of the innermost parts (the heart) and the ability to walk (the actions) of the person. Remember the animal represents the person offering the sacrifice.
 - Heb. 10:22 – “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”
 - Jer. 4:14 – “O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.”

3. A sweet aroma

- Did you know that odors/aromas/smells travel through your nose to your olfactory bulb which processes the smell and sends it directly to your amygdala which is the emotional center of the brain, which then signals the hippocampus, where memories are stored? This is why smells often trigger memories and emotions.
 - Eph. 5:2 “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”
 - Ps. 105:8-9a “He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, The covenant which He made with Abraham...”
 - Genesis 8:21 “And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.’”

CHAPTER 1 OUTLINE

- V. 1-9 is specifically relating to cattle or oxen.
- V.10-13 specifically relates to sheep or goats.
- V.14-17 specifically relates to birds.

Notice, there are three tiers of economic offerings. Those with more money could offer a larger animal, while those with less money could offer a smaller animal, which would cost less. Contrary to popular belief, God does not favor the wealthy. There is equal access to atonement for all, regardless of their economic status.

V.10-13: sheep or goats

“If his offering is of the flocks—of the sheep or of the goats—as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar; but he shall wash the entrails and the legs with water. Then the priest shall bring it all and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”

- Addition: sacrifices are to be made on the **north side** of the altar. Why?

1. Practical due to the layout of the courtyard

- Each area had a specific purpose:
 - North – smaller animal sacrifice (1:11)
 - East – fatty ashes (1:16)
 - West – Water basin for washing (Ex. 30:18)
 - South – ramp of approach

2. To avoid any connection with sun worship (east or west)

V.14-17: birds

*“And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the LORD is of birds, then he shall bring his offering of **turtledoves** ¹ or young pigeons. The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out at the side of the altar. And he shall remove its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar on the east side, into the place for ashes. Then he shall split it at its wings, **but shall not divide it completely**; ² and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”*

Two things of note here:

1. Remember that Jesus’ parents offered birds at his birth, which was an indicator of their social status:
 - Luke 2:22-24 *“Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ... and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of **turtledoves or two young pigeons**.’”*
2. Bird: split, but not severed completely. Symbolizes wholeness and unity.
 - Harkens back to Abraham when he offered the birds in response to God’s offered covenant with him. Genesis 15:9-10 *“So He said to him, ‘Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; **but he did not cut the birds in two**.’”*

Commentary by Charles John Ellicott, Anglican Bishop, 1905

- “It was probably out of consideration for the feelings of the poor offerer, and to increase the importance of the otherwise small offering, that the priest himself brought the victim to the altar and slew it instead of the worshipper performing these acts, as in the case of quadrupeds. The imposition of hands upon the victim was dispensed with, both because the bird was too small for this ceremony, and because the offerer brought it in his hands to the place of sacrifice, thus conveying by this act the idea involved in the imposition of hands.
- When the bird is handed to him, the priest is not to use any knife, but is to nip off its head with his nails, throw the severed head on the altar fire, and thus cause it to ascend in the sweet smelling savor. As the small quantity of blood could not be caught in a bowl, and would not suffice for throwing it or pouring it on the four walls, as was the case in the offering of quadrupeds, he pressed it out from the headless body, and let it run on the walls.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Rituals have gotten a bad rap in the evangelical church today, but why isn't ritual in and of itself a "bad thing"?
2. Which aspects of verses 2-3 resonate with you the most? Why?
3. How is the burnt sacrifice a picture of the Christian life?
4. How do the concepts of confession, designation, and transference reflect salvation?
5. Why is it significant that the offerer had to kill the sacrifice themselves?
4. Why did the priests wash the entrails and legs of the sacrifice?