



COMMUNITY **DISCUSSION**
gr:ups **GUIDE**



SERMON PASSAGE: Leviticus 1



REVIEW THE SERMON

1. Read the prep verse (Romans 12:1) and the sermon's Bible passage to recall the content
2. Briefly review the sermon outline
 - a. Burnt Offerings
 - i. The Hebrew word for "burnt offering" actually means to "ascend," literally to "go up in smoke."
 - ii. Types
 1. Herd – Bull
 2. Flock – Sheep/goat
 3. Bird – Turtledove/pigeon
 - b. Steps
 - i. Selection of the animal
 1. The choicest, the best an individual had to offer
 - ii. Identification with the animal
 1. Personally/Symbolically transferring their sins upon the animal
 - iii. Death of the Animal (By the individual)
 - iv. Draining/Sprinkling of the Blood (by the Priests)
 - v. The animal was then skinned, cut into pieces, certain body parts were washed, and then burned on the altar until they were completely consumed
 - c. When and Why of Burnt Offerings
 - i. Voluntary offering
 - ii. Daily burnt offering - Offering presented at the time of the morning and the evening prayer

- iii. Sabbath burnt offering - included double the amount of all the elements of the ordinary daily sacrifice
- iv. Festal burnt offering - celebrated at the new moon, the Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles
- v. Occasional offerings
 - 1. When a priest was consecrated
 - 2. At the purification of women
 - 3. At the cleansing of lepers
 - 4. At the purification of ceremonial defilement
 - 5. In connection with the vow of a Nazarite

d. Application to us today

- i. The Burnt Offering reminds and teaches us that the real worship of God is costly
- ii. The Burnt Offering reminds and teaches us that man needs God's provision to be holy as He as Holy continually.
- iii. The Burnt Offering reminds and teaches us that through Christ's sacrifice God is satisfied completely



DIGGING DEEPER

1. Does God Have a Nose?

In Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17 one reads that the burnt offerings provided a “pleasing aroma to the Lord.” We will see this phrase used throughout Leviticus. This begs the question, does God really care about the smell of the sacrifices?

First, let's discuss the act of God smelling. God is a spirit (John 4:24) and does not have a physical nose, so why is He smelling things? This is an example of anthropomorphism – describing God with anatomical or emotional terms so that we can better understand Him. This is a form of figurative language and does not imply that God has actual body. For example, Isaiah 59:1 mentions God's “hand” and “ear,” in Deuteronomy 33:27 God has “arms,” in 2 Chronicles 16:9 God has “eyes,” and in Matthew 4:4 God has a “mouth.” Likewise, here in Leviticus 1 God has a “nose.”

The importance of the sacrifice's aroma is not the smell but what the smell represents. The book of Leviticus is full of intentional word pictures God designed for His people, to set them apart and to be holy. The smell of the burnt offerings represents the substitutionary atonement for sin. In other words, it represents an **action of propitiation**.

What does propitiation mean?

We see the term explicitly used in Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, and 1 John 4:10 and it is used implicitly throughout Scripture. Propitiation involves a two-part action:

- (a) It appeases the wrath of God and
- (b) It reconciles us to Him.

To help us understand more deeply we will employ one of the tools of Bible study, namely the **principle of first mention**. When an important word, phrase, or concept occurs for the first time in the Bible the context in which it occurs sets the pattern for its primary usage and development throughout the rest of Scripture. The very first mention of an aroma of a sacrifice is Genesis 8:21.

Read and reflect on Genesis 8:1-22.

Upon leaving the ark, 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” (Genesis 8:20). Then, “the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma” (Genesis 8:21). Noah’s sacrifice was pleasing because it was a propitiation of God’s righteousness. The sacrifice acknowledged that God’s wrath on sinful humanity was appeased (through the flood) and Noah and his family were reconciled to God (with a new covenant in Genesis 9). God was pleased with Noah’s sacrifice and then gave the promise to never again destroy every living creature with a flood (Genesis 8:21-22).

In the same manner, the burnt offerings in Leviticus 1 emphasize the action of propitiation rather than the smoke of the offerings. With the substitutionary atonement (see for instance Leviticus 1:4), God’s wrath over the person’s sin was appeased and the person was reconciled with God. In other words, the “pleasing aroma to the Lord” is the **aroma of repentance**.

God is focused on the repentant heart behind the sacrifice not the literal smell of the sacrifice or incense. When our heart motivation towards repentance is not pure, when one merely goes through the ritual motions, God is disgusted rather than pleased with the aroma (see Isaiah 1:11,13; 10:13).

As we approach Easter, reflect on the substitutionary atonement of Jesus dying as a substitute for us. He was the unblemished (sinless) sacrifice that was offered on our behalf and He was a pleasing aroma to God (Ephesians 5:2).

Note, in addition to the aroma of repentance or aroma of propitiation we see in Leviticus 1, there are three other aromas that are pleasing to God in Scripture:

- a. Aroma of our prayers: We will see this as the aromatic incense that the priests were to burn continually on the altar inside the Holy of Holies. See also Revelation 5:8.
- b. Aroma of our witness: Read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 2:14-17.
- c. Aroma of love: Read and reflect on Ephesians 5:2.

2. Altar's Symbolism

The Hebrew word for altar is "mizbeach," which means "the place of slaughter." It is aptly named as the altar is the place where animals were sacrificed for the substitutionary atonement of sin and where we go to sacrifice self before God.

The altar is a designated place where a person consecrates himself fully to God. It is where a person transacts business with God (e.g., prayer at the altar, covenant of marriage at the wedding altar, etc.). In Leviticus 1 the transaction occurring is atonement from sin. On the altar, the people made sacrifices that God accepted as substitutionary atonement for their sin. It was a holy place. God gave the building specifications (Exodus 27), God gave the instructions (Leviticus), God made the materials (wood, elements for bronze, animals being sacrificed), God lit the initial sacrificial fire (Leviticus 6:12-13) which was never to be allowed to go out, and God does the work of atonement. The only thing man brings to the altar is sin.

Read and reflect on Exodus 27:1-8 (keeping in mind that a cubit is approximately 18 inches).

God outlines specifications for the altar used in Leviticus in Exodus 27:1-8. Figure 1 depicts a rendition of the altar. It was a hollow wooden box overlaid with bronze, measuring 4.5 ft high and 7.5 ft long and wide. The distance of 7.5 feet is approximately the length of an average couch. So, visualize a square of couches that are 4.5 feet high and you have a good picture of the size of the altar. The altar was large enough to hold sacrifices of bulls, sheep, and goats.

The bronze grate of this altar was not on the top like a modern barbecue grill. The priests were not grilling steak, they were letting God's fire consume the sacrifice completely. The grate was placed half way between the bottom and the top of the altar. The horns reached out to all directions and were employed to bind the sacrifices (Psalm 118:27). In addition, the priests smeared the blood of the sacrifice on the horns. Why horns? Symbolically horns represented exaltation and strength, being the highest part of the animal, carried aloft as a badge of power and the honor.

Figure 2 illustrates the altar being used by the priests. The altar was not a pristine, unused, decorative piece of furniture. It was routinely covered with blood and ashes, charred by fire, and surrounded by the smell of burning meat and much smoke. Placed in the outer court of the wilderness tabernacle (Figure 3; Exodus 40:6), the altar was the most prominent and

If you were an Israelite seeing and smelling the burnt offerings all the time from afar and approaching the altar in person with your sacrifice, how would have the altar informed your understanding of God's holiness and man's sin? _____

Now that you have a better understanding of the Old Testament altar, what aspects transfer to our contemporary altars? _____



PRAYER

1. Read Isaiah 53 this week. Praise God that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins.
 2. Do you need to transact business with God to consecrate your life to Him? Pray and do so today.
 3. Is your life a pleasing aroma to God? Pray to God to correct your life in obedience.
 4. Reflect this Easter season on Jesus being the altar, sacrifice, blood, and priest all in one for us. Praise be to God in the highest!
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