

April 9

Scriptures: Read Leviticus 1 & 2

Key Verse: “Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.” (Leviticus 1:4)

Overview

When we read about the sacrifices in the book of Leviticus, we must understand two things: the position of God, and the position of the offer/worshipper. The Most Holy God, full of grace and mercy, summoned Moses, not from the fiery mountain of Sinai but from the tent of meeting upon which the glory of His presence came to rest and dwell in the midst of His covenant people (Ex. 40:34-38). The worshipper was privileged to come with humble reverence into communion with God through the blood of the sacrifice, being made acceptable and reconciled with Him, receiving forgiveness for sins. This theme of atonement (“covering” for sin) is found in the first chapter of Leviticus (1:4) and continues throughout the whole book. The instructions were intended for all the people to hear (1:2), not only the priests, for all were welcomed to draw near and commune with God through the means of the sacrificial offering. Rich and poor alike would bring their voluntary gifts out of appreciation for what the Lord had done, be it an expensive bullock, or a simple pigeon. In any case, the sacrifice had cost them something, and was to be willingly and happily given. Jesus stressed the importance of the right motivation and the intent of the heart; only then would any offering be acceptable to God (Matt. 5:23-24; Mark 12:33).

Burnt offerings were to be always offered up to God. They were to be unblemished males, the largest and strongest animal, since perfection was necessary. The offer was to firmly lay his hand upon the animal’s head signifying his identification with it and laying his guilt upon it. The animal’s death represented the death the offer deserved for his own sins. Great care was taken for the blood of the sacrificial animal, since this is all-important and necessary for atonement (17:11). It is awful to think of how our Lord Jesus painfully shed His blood, but this was absolutely necessary for our atonement.

No part of the burnt offering was to be totally consumed on the altar, signifying total surrender to God. A great biblical truth is seen in this offering: the people were able to come close to God in worship and have their sins covered—all because of a substitute. Jesus gave Himself as a substitute when He died on the cross. He offered Himself entirely as a sacrifice to God in our place. He was the “sweet aroma to the Lord” (1:9), the perfect substitute, bearing our sin and shame that we might be forgiven and find favor before the Most Holy God. We, like the Israelites, in response to God’s acceptance of that is pleasing to Him and be cleansed daily.

The grain or meal offering (Ch.2) was brought to the Tabernacle as a gift, possibly expressing gratitude or reverence to God. This was the only offering that did not involve blood, but it was usually accompanied by an animal offering. A handful of this offering was burnt as a memorial, and all that remained was to be eaten by Aaron and his sons. It also expressed personal dedication to the Lord. In offering it, the worshipper recognized the sovereignty of God, His grace and goodness in giving the fruit of the earth, and his dependence upon Him to sustain life. This offering was to contain no leaven (which pictured sin), but it, like all the other offerings, was to contain salt, representing that which preserved against corruption and added flavor. Salt pictured permanence and was symbolic of the eternal nature of God’s covenant (2:13; Num. 18:19). Still today, believers in Jesus who have been purged by His precious blood and are, as the Apostle Paul termed, “living sacrifices” (Rom. 12:1, 2), enjoy the covenant relationship with God and are, as Jesus said, “the salt of earth” (Matt. 5:13).

Prayer

Lord God, we present our bodies as living sacrifices according to the grace you’ve given unto us. Thank you very, very much that Your hand of judgment for sin was laid firmly on His at the altar of the cross so that we who believe are set free from the penalty of sin.