

**April 10**

**Scriptures:** Read Leviticus 3 & 4

**Key Verse:** “Then he shall carry the bull outside the camp, and burn it…it is a sin offering for the assembly.” (Leviticus 4:21)

## **Overview**

The peace offering was a beautiful voluntary expression of the Israelites’ gratitude toward God. It was offered to publicly recognize God’s goodness for His blessings and to express love, thanks, and praise to Him. The Hebrew word for the offering is “shalom”, meaning “peace” or “wholeness”. The result of the offering was to be peace between God and man, and wholeness or peace within one’s soul. This offering has been translated as the “fellowship offering” (NIV), since it was the only one from which the worshipper might eat a portion along with the officiating priest. On occasion it could be shared with friends in a holy gathering, thus allowing fellowship with God and other believers. The greatest sacrifice, Jesus Christ, has now become the believer’s peace (Eph. 2:13, 14), for it is only through Him that we receive mercy, forgiveness, true inner peace, and fellowship with God.

Certain fatty parts of this sacrifice were not to be eaten by anyone, but were to be burned on the altar (3:11, 16), becoming a sweet aroma unto God. This is the Lord’s portion alone, for “all the fat is the Lord’s” (3:16), as is the all-important blood, so no one was to eat from them (3:17). This warning is stressed seventeen times in the book of Leviticus. God gave this law, and many others, not only for symbolic significance, but for ensuring the health of His people and teaching obedience.

The sin offering was a mandatory sacrifice for the purpose of atonement for specific sins done unintentionally, or in ignorance. Since all people, as sons of Adam, have a sinful nature, the sin offering was required for the resulting guilt and defilement. It required a confession of sin and was to result in forgiveness and cleansing. However, it was not merely the external act of sacrificing that brought atonement. Rather, as the New Testament teaches, and even some Jewish commentators express, the sin offering was effectual only to make atonement for those who were truly repentant and had faith that God was able to bring about their atonement.

Jesus seemed to allude to mankind’s unintentional sinning in His prayer while on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). We, as believers today, need to learn more of God and His Word and to ask the Holy Spirit to quicken our spirits and write His laws upon our hearts and minds (Heb. 10:16) that we may not fall into sin. Most importantly, we need to always plead the blood of Jesus to cover our sin. As the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews stressed, sin could not be taken away by the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:4), but “with His own blood He [Jesus] entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). Jesus Christ is the true sin offering whose blood cleanses from all sin for which the old covenant’s sacrificial system was inadequate (e.g. Num. 15:30).

When the high priest sinned, and thus brought guilt upon all Israelite people whom he represented (4:3), or when the whole congregation of Israel was guilty of sinning unintentionally (4:13), the sin offering was to be a young, unblemished bull, the most costly of any sacrifice. Only on such an occasion and on the Day of Atonement the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled seven times (the number of perfection) before the veil of the sanctuary. This sin offering was not to be eaten by any priest, as it was in other cases, but after burning the fat, and kidneys of the bull, all the rest was to be taken outside the camp and burned (4:12, 21). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews clearly shows a parallel here: “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (Heb. 13:12). Indeed, Jesus was crucified on Golgatha, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, and it is to Him we must go; to a place despised in the world’s eyes, but made holy by His presence and His wonderful work at atonement.

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, we worship You and we partake by faith of the peace offering made by Your Son and our Savior. May our lives show forth the peace that You have provided by the blood of the cross. (Col.1:20)