



# *Leaves* From the Tree

*Studies from God's Word*

In 2005, Pastor Tim Bourgeois began a daily bible reading to encourage Tree of Life Christian Church and the larger body of Christ to read the entire Bible cover to cover.

The following series of articles are transcripts of Pastor Tim's original emails.

Please use these articles for meditation, personal devotion, Bible study, or your own daily Bible reading.



LEVITICUS 1 - 6

## Leviticus 1

***1:1-3 - "Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the herd or the flock..'"***

The book of Leviticus is often considered one of the more difficult books to read and understand by many Christians. As a result, it is often avoided. Avoiding reading through Leviticus is a tremendous mistake for Christians. Yes, the subject matter requires a bit of concentration, but it is worth the effort. Leviticus is foundational to the core of our relationship with the Lord. The main focus of Leviticus is the sacrificial system of the tabernacle worship. Believers today tend to get lost in the details of the various sacrifices commanded by the Lord and practiced by Israel. If we keep one principle uppermost in our perspective as we read through the book, we will gain much more of what God has revealed to us here. That principle is that all of the sacrifices of the tabernacle were designed to point forward toward Christ.

In the study of the next few chapters for instance, we will discover that there were five main categories of sacrificial offerings Israel was to make to the Lord in the tabernacle. These five kinds of offerings are simply portraying five distinct aspects or elements of what Christ accomplished in His sacrifice on the cross. These Levitical sacrifices were never intended by the Lord to have any value or power on their own apart from the future sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:1-4). Faith in these sacrifices was really forward-looking faith in the cross of Christ which was to come.

Once a New Covenant believer in Christ understands that connection between the tabernacle sacrifices as spiritual previews of the cross, and the cross as the actual fulfillment of what they could only foreshadow, then they are ready for a profitable study of this book of Leviticus. As we read through these various sacrifices and tabernacle rituals keep this question in mind; "what is this meant to teach me about Christ and the cross?"

The first word of the book is "Then." This tells us that Leviticus was not written as a stand alone book. Then is a connecting word indicating a continuation of what has already been said. In this case, it points directly back to the book of Exodus. The connection is that Exodus ended with the completion of the tabernacle, and God's presence filling the tent as His confirmation that He had accepted it as His house and the new meeting place between Himself and His people. Leviticus begins right where Exodus left off with the activities that the Lord ordained should fill His house. If we stop reading at Exodus we will only have the story of the building of the tabernacle without the specifics of what God wants His people to do in the tabernacle.

***1:3-9 - " If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. He shall slay the young bull before the LORD; and Aaron's sons the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting. He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet over the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar. Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD."***

Of the five kinds of sacrifices ordained in Leviticus, the first covered is the Burnt Offering. This was the most common of all the offerings. It was a daily offering to be performed by the priests every morning and every evening. In addition, any Israelite could approach the Lord by bringing a specified animal or bird to offer in this way. It was called a burnt offering because the entire animal except for its hide was to be burnt upon the altar. It portrayed that a partial offering or sacrifice was not sufficient to satisfy the Lord. The Lord required a complete sacrifice because His Son was to give Himself entirely on the cross holding back nothing in offering Himself for our sins.

The burnt offering is not introduced here for the first time, but new and additional details are given. Previously we saw Noah (Genesis 8:21), Abraham (Genesis 22:2, 13), and Moses (Exodus 24:5) making burnt offerings to the Lord. From these examples it is clear that the burnt offering served a range of worship purposes. It was appropriate to make a burnt offering to the Lord for personal atonement for sins, for thanksgiving for what the Lord had done, and as an expression of commitment to the Lord and submission to His will.

Some of the details given in this passage are introduced for the first time as elements of a proper burnt offering. One is that the animal offered should be male pointing and without defect. This requirement serves as a type of Christ in pointing toward His sinless perfection as a man which uniquely qualified Him among all people as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. "...but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:19). The physical spotlessness of the animal represented the spiritual purity and sinlessness of Christ.

The next key detail is that the person bringing the offering was to lay their hands upon the animal before it was killed for the sacrifice. The word describes more than a light touch. They were to press their hands upon the animal. The principle is spiritual identification with the animal. God wanted the person making the

offering to actually feel the life within the animal just before it was killed so that they could recognize as it was slain for them that the animal was receiving what they deserved themselves. This was training their perspectives for the day when Christ would come and take their place upon the cross. We never physically laid our hands upon Him, but by our faith, we identify with the life He relinquished when He took our deserved place upon the cross.

After laying hands upon the animal to be sacrificed the ritual then took a dramatic turn. The person that had brought the animal was, with the help of one of the priests to take the animal through the outer doorway into the courtyard surrounding God's house. There, on the north side of the altar the person making the offering was to take the knife provided by the priest and slit the throat of the animal themselves. As they did, the priest stood there with a basin and caught the blood flowing from the throat of the animal. Once the animal died, the person then was to skin the animal, cut it into pieces, and wash certain parts to finish preparing it for the altar upon which it was to be burned. This was a very messy process which was designed by God to spiritually impact the one making the offering. They were not allowed to just give the animal to the priest and let them do the "dirty work", but were required to personally end the life of the animal that was taking their place. The spiritual parallel is that we are meant to fully identify with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. His suffering and death was in our place. Our hands put Him there in a very direct way.

One last detail deserves our attention. When the burnt offering was carried out as the Lord had ordained, the result as it was burning is described as creating "a soothing aroma to the LORD." This meant something more than the Lord enjoying the aroma of cooked meat. The Lord uses the physical description of enjoying the smell of the cooking meat to indicate a deeper spiritual principle. The burnt offering was necessary because the price required for sin of the person making the offering had now been satisfied. This image of a soothing aroma displays the complete satisfaction of God that His Law has been honored and His justice has been answered by the death of the sacrifice. Christ's death on the cross is described in the New Testament using this exact metaphor of a pleasing aroma. "Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." (Ephesians 5:2)

***1:14 - "But if his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering from the turtledoves or from young pigeons."***

In the category of burnt offerings, there were three groups of acceptable sacrifices. The groups were herd, flock, and birds. They all served the same function as an acceptable burnt offering to the Lord. The determination of which of the three to offer was purely economic. The first category was the most valuable of the three. Oxen would be a typical example of a herd sacrifice. The second group of flock sacrifices would be from the sheep or goats. The third allowed certain kinds of birds to be offered such as doves. The guideline was that

whichever kind a person could afford to offer was the appropriate one to make. If a person could afford a lamb, but only offered a dove, then their sacrifice was not acceptable to the Lord. He and they would know what they could realistically afford. The two sides of this coin were that the Lord commanded that each person offer the appropriate value for their own life, but at the same time He mercifully made allowance for the economic limitations of those who could not afford either a bull or sheep for a sacrifice.

---

## Leviticus 2

***2:1-3 - "Now when anyone presents a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it. He shall then bring it to Aaron's sons the priests; and shall take from it his handful of its fine flour and of its oil with all of its frankincense. And the priest shall offer it up in smoke as its memorial portion on the altar, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy, of the offerings to the LORD by fire."***

This chapter introduces the second of the five kinds of offerings the Lord ordained for Israel to bring to Him to the tabernacle. The grain offerings differed from the burnt offerings of the last chapter in several important ways and were similar in one detail. The similarity to burnt offering was that a portion of the grain offering was taken and placed upon the altar by the priests and burnt. The burnt portion also produced, like the burnt offering, a soothing aroma which was pleasing to the Lord and signified His acceptance of the offering and pleasure with what was offered and the one who offered it. The main differences between the offerings were that the grain offering did not involve the death of a sacrifice and its blood, and only a portion of this offering was placed on the altar.

Since the grain offering did not involve the shed blood and death of a sacrifice, it was not an atonement offering. In other words it was not designed to address the issue of sin in the life of the one offering the sacrifice. Other sacrifices addressed the sin issue. The grain offering was focused on another important issue in our lives. What was to be offered was grain grown and harvested by the person offering. It was also not to be offered in its raw form fresh from the harvest. It was first to be processed and the grain removed from the chaff and husk, and then ground into fine flour. The term fine flour did not refer so much to how small or fine the grind was, but to the quality of the flour produced. There were different qualities of flour produced each harvest, and the fine flour was made from only the inner kernel of grain. It was the most prized and therefore most valuable flour. It was only produced by the combination of the work of planting and harvesting. Later in the chapter we see that the grain could also be offered in a cooked form which also adds the element of the work involved in cooking.

These elements lead us to the meaning of the grain offerings. The burnt offering signified that the entire person belonged to the Lord. The grain offering was focused on the work of the person making the offering. The grain represented his life work of whatever kind and the fruit of that work being offered back to the Lord in acknowledgement of the blessing of the Lord upon his work. It was a way of honoring the Lord as Lord over not just all of one's life in general, but of all one's labors. The symbolic connection to one's works was not a message about working for salvation, or in any sense earning the Lord's favor, but rather in recognition that everything we have produced in our lives only has value because it ultimately belongs to the Lord, not to us. The offering returns a portion to the Lord in the form of a handful of what He has previously given to the offerer. It was to be offered combined with frankincense. Remember from our study in Exodus on the altar of incense that frankincense was offered also on that altar as a fragrant aroma which symbolized prayer. By adding it to the grain offering it showed that the offering was a form of prayer in symbol that pleased the Lord as the offerer honored Him as the Lord over all their labors.

The giving of the handful of grain from the amount brought for the offering worked on a similar principle to the tithe. When we tithe on our income, we are giving one tenth of the whole income back to the Lord. The tenth portion spiritually represents the whole. By giving the tenth we declare that we believe that all of our income came from the Lord to us as His blessing. It also honors Him as the owner of it all. When we tithe we are not saying that 10% belongs to the Lord and 90% belongs to us. Instead we are showing by the sacrificial return of the valued 10% as a gift to the Lord that we recognize all 100% belongs to the Lord. It is a blessing that He allows us to use the 90% to meet our needs, but the correct identification of who owns it is critical to a healthy perspective of our resources. In the grain offering, giving the handful to be burned on the altar, and the remainder of the grain offering to the priests signified the worshipper's faith that their entire harvest of grain belonged to the Lord, and not to them.

Here are two passages that carry forward this principle of our worship in a New Covenant expression. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31). "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17). The point is that it is an important aspect of our worship to give the Lord His proper place in our hearts in whatever we do. Our worship is not meant to be limited to Sunday mornings within the walls of the church meeting place. We are called to honor Him 24 / 7 in whatever work we are engaged. The grain offering was a way to honor the Lord as a shepherd, farmer, soldier, priest, potter, baker, and every other endeavor that He blessed.

***2:4-9 - "Now when you bring an offering of a grain offering baked in an oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers spread with oil. If your offering is a grain offering made on the griddle, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil; you shall break it into bits and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. Now if your offering is a grain offering made in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. When you bring in the grain offering which is made of these things to the LORD, it shall be presented to the priest and he shall bring it to the altar. The priest then shall take up from the grain offering its memorial portion, and shall offer it up in smoke on the altar as an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD."***

When the grain offering was made in the form of a baked cake it was to be prepared a specific way. The same quality fine flour was to be mixed with oil and shaped into a kind of unleavened pancake. It was also acceptable to make bread wafers and spread oil on the wafers. A third acceptable way was to break the baked bread into bits and pour oil over it for the offering. In each case oil was essential to the offering. The oil was a symbolic indication of the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the one bringing the offering. The point is that it is only under the influence of the Spirit's work in our hearts that we are inclined to worship God in the way that pleases Him. Jesus alluded to this principle when He declared, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24). Worship that follows the outer form of worship rituals and practices without the spiritual heart, attitude and perspective that pleases the Lord is not what the Lord desires. If we go through the motions of the activities of worship, yet our hearts are not fully engaged with Him in love, honor, reverence, and adoration then our worship is not worship in spirit and truth.

An interesting detail of one of the baked offerings is worth noting. When they made the bread wafers they were to spread the oil on the wafers. The word translated spread is a form of the Hebrew word for anoint which is related to the word for Messiah. The Messiah was the anointed, or oiled One. These wafers were to be anointed with oil before being offered. Ancient Jewish rabbis tell us that when they anointed the wafers for the grain offering they spread the oil in the shape of a cross on the bread. They probably did this as a way to show that the entire piece of bread was covered without literally covering every inch of the bread's surface. Nevertheless, it formed an interesting connection since the word for spread was related to the word for Messiah and was spread in a cross on the bread offered.



***2:10-12 - "The remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy of the offerings to the LORD by fire. No grain offering, which you bring to the LORD, shall be made with leaven, for you shall not offer up in smoke any leaven or any honey as an offering by fire to the LORD. As an offering of first fruits you shall bring them to the LORD, but they shall not ascend for a soothing aroma on the altar."***

Once the handful of flour was removed from the offering to be burnt on the altar, the remainder of the grain offering was not taken home by the one offering, but was instead given to the Levitical priests on duty in the tabernacle. The priests were given this flour by the command of the Lord. The priests, and only the priests were then allowed to eat this flour for their own food. It was reserved only for the priests because the Lord called it "a thing most holy", meaning that only those that were fully set apart as a priest and ordained to represent the Lord in that high calling could eat this offered bread. It was the Lord's bread and He allowed those that most directly served Him to partake of the food that was offered to honor Him.

There were two prohibitions for ingredients for the grain offering. Leaven and honey were not to be added to the grain offering which was to be burnt on the Lord's altar. The significance of the leaven and honey prohibition had to do with the practical qualities of these two ingredients and what they spiritually represented. Both leaven and honey were well known and widely used in various recipes for bread because leaven caused the bread to rise and honey sweetened its taste. However, both were also fermentation agents. Foods combined with leaven or honey were far more susceptible to corruption or rotting. They symbolized the natural tendency in a fallen and rebellious world that people have toward spiritual corruption. Because of the fall of Adam in the Garden, left to themselves, things in this world tend to deteriorate, not improve. Spiritually, unless the Lord intervenes people tend toward sin and corruption, not greater holiness and righteousness. By ordaining for this offering to be corruption free the Lord was indicating that He wants all of our work in this world to be free from the corrupting influences of the fallen world around us.

***2:13 - "Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt."***

The final detail for the grain offering was essential. Every grain offering was to be made with salt. On a natural level, salt is often added to bread recipes because of its ability to enhance the flavor, but the purpose of salting the grain offering was for the spiritual connection to the other known quality of salt in ancient cultures. While the presence of leaven and honey caused foods to corrupt more quickly, the presence of salt acted as a preservative. Salt was commonly used to slow down corruption, especially in a desert environment. As a result, salt was recognized as a symbol of something long-lasting and resistant to corruption.

When covenants were formed between people, the common practice was for the people entering into the covenant relationship to share eating a portion of salt together. This was then called a covenant of salt. The Lord refers to this practice in this passage and identifies the salt for the grain offering to be the salt of the covenant. The picture presented by a salted grain offering was that the relationship between the Lord and the one bringing the offering was salted and free from corrupting influences. It indicated a long-lasting and pure covenant fellowship.

---

### Leviticus 3

***3:1-5 - "Now if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without defect before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and slay it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar. From the sacrifice of the peace offerings he shall present an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron's sons shall offer it up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering, which is on the wood that is on the fire; it is an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD."***

This chapter is dedicated to the third of the five tabernacle offerings; the peace offerings. The peace offerings share some similarities to the burnt offering in that it is a bloody offering requiring the death of the sacrifice, the animal offered is to be without defect, the worshipper was to lay his hand on the offering and then kill it himself. The peace offering also had unique features that we do not see in any of the other offerings. For instance, in the burnt offering all of the animal was to be offered on the altar except for its hide. In the peace offering only the fat portions of the animal were placed on the altar.

The peace offering was ordained and performed for three kinds of occasions. It was an expression of thanksgiving to the Lord for previous blessings received. It was offered as an acknowledgment of a vow taken and performed by the worshipper. It was also a free-will offering whenever the heart of the worshipper was moved to honor the Lord apart from the other offerings. It is translated as a "peace" offering because the Hebrew word is related to the word shalom which means peace. It has also been translated as a fellowship offering. Calling it a peace offering is probably the best way to describe the spiritual intent behind this particular offering. The Biblical principle of peace with God is a main theme running throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. This offering addresses that issue in a symbolic way.

The implication of a peace offering made to God is that apart from sacrifice there is something between God and man that has broken their relationship of peace. That something is not on God's side of the relationship, but ours. Our sin and rebellion toward God have broken the peace with God that as he was originally created, the first man, Adam enjoyed with God as they shared a fellowship of peace in the Garden of Eden. God has provided a way for the peace between him and us to be restored, but we will never have peace with God based upon our feelings, desires, good intentions or good works. Peace only comes from sacrifice, and only the sacrifice that God ordains. No sacrifice means that there is no peace between God and that person. This is one of the essential principles of Old Testament theology that lays a critical foundation in symbolism for the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Many people today who do not understand the holiness and justice of God ask why it is necessary to believe that Christ died for our sins on the cross in order to enjoy peace with God. It is worth repeating; unless there is a sacrifice which pays the price our sins deserve, then there can be no peace between ourselves and God.

Interestingly, even though this is the peace offering, its purpose was not to make peace with God! The burnt offering which we studied in Leviticus 1 is the sacrifice which made peace with God for Israel. The peace offering does not make peace, but rather celebrates the peace which now exists between God and the person making this offering. This distinction is seen in the relationship between the burnt and peace offerings. The peace offering was to be offered up "in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering." It was only to be offered after the burnt offering and was placed on top of the burnt offering. The whole sacrifice of the burnt offering would be placed upon the altar and as it was burning, the fat of the peace offering was placed on top of it. The order establishes that the atonement established by the burnt offering is what makes peace between God and the one approaching Him. The peace offering was an offering that confirmed and celebrated the restoration of peace with God.

Both the burnt offering and the peace offering point to the cross, but in different ways. Jesus offered Himself for us as a whole burnt offering upon the cross to make peace between God and us. Once we recognize His death on the cross as our only basis for peace with God, we then celebrate what He has accomplished for us. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2). The New Testament practice which we follow in our worship that captures this concept of a celebration of peace which has already been established for us by sacrifice is the Lord's Supper, or communion. When we eat the bread and wine that represent the body and blood of Christ that were given for us on the cross, we are not making peace with God by eating and drinking. We are not sacrificing Christ each time in an effort to make a peace with God that does not yet exist. Instead, we are remembering, honoring and celebrating that Christ has already made peace with God once for all on our

behalf. Even though the details are not given until chapter seven of Leviticus, part of the peace offering was that the person making the offering was to eat from the rest of the animal offered after the blood was drained and the fat removed. They ate it in a joyful recognition that their relationship with God was a fellowship of peace.

***3:16-17 - "The priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire for a soothing aroma; all fat is the LORD'S. It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall not eat any fat or any blood."***

Unlike the burnt offering, the distinction of this offering was that only the fat was removed and actually offered on the altar. To understand why the fat portions were offered it is necessary to identify the differences between modern perspectives of fat and ancient perspectives. Today fat is for the most part considered an unwanted substance. To refer to someone as fat is generally considered an insult. Fat was not viewed in that way in Biblical times. Remember in the days of Joseph that Pharaoh had a dream of a coming famine in Egypt. The imagery that God used to show Pharaoh seven years of famine following seven years of prosperity was seven gaunt cows swallowing seven fat cows. Fat cows were considered a great blessing to possess. Eating the fat of the land was a way of describing a prosperous life in an abundant land.

In ancient cultures fat was the best and most valuable part of the animal. This was because a fat animal indicated a prosperous owner. As a practical consideration the fat also was the portion that flavored the meat of the animal for enjoyment in eating it. In the peace offering the Lord gave a specific requirement. The fat of the sacrifice was to be separated from the rest of the meat and only the fat was to be burned on the altar unto the Lord. Here, in this passage the Lord makes a clear requirement that the fat was to be saved for Him; "all fat is the LORD'S." The meaning was that all the fat of the sacrifice belonged to the Lord. The Lord allowed the rest of the meat of the peace offering to be shared and enjoyed as food by the priests and the worshipper as we will see in chapter seven, but the fat was not to be consumed by the worshipper or even the priests. This was not a health consideration as though the Lord was requiring a low fat diet for His people. This was a symbolic way of demonstrating that the Lord deserves the best and most valuable. He required not just a sacrifice which was without defect, but also the best, most valuable portion of that sacrifice. In Christ, God received the very best and most valuable sacrifice possible.

There is one other aspect of our relationship with God that corresponds to the peace offering. Since this is not an offering that makes peace with God, but recognizes and appropriately responds to the peace that now exists between Him and us, this offering speaks to our discipleship response to the Lord after we are saved. "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'" (Matthew 16:24).

We are each called by the Lord as a response of discipleship to take up our own cross. His cross is a saving cross. Our cross which we take up is not a saving cross, but it is still a cross of sacrifice. This sacrifice is the sacrifice of what we would choose for our life for the sake of doing His will for our life instead. When the Lord calls us to make this sacrifice it is in light of the peace we enjoy with Him in our salvation. It is a sacrifice of our fat to Him. We offer Him our best and most valuable as an expression of appreciation for having saved us. Anything less than our best and most valuable is an insufficient thanks for all He has done for us.

---

## Leviticus 4

***4:1-7 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them, if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD a bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. He shall bring the bull to the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull and slay the bull before the LORD. Then the anointed priest is to take some of the blood of the bull and bring it to the tent of meeting, and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary. The priest shall also put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense which is before the LORD in the tent of meeting; and all the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the doorway of the tent of meeting."***

Following the detailed instructions regarding the Burnt offerings, the Grain offerings, and the Peace offerings, these next two chapters four and five address the fourth of the five tabernacle offerings. These are the laws of the sin offerings. The primary difference between the burnt offering which provided atonement for the people and the sin offering, was that the burnt offering addressed the issue of sin in the life of a person as a whole. The sin offering was designed as God's provision for specific individual sins among the covenant people. This offering, like all the others points ultimately to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins and highlights one aspect of the cross. The cross was not intended to provide only a general answer for sin for mankind, but more than that was God's specific answer for every individual you or I will ever commit in the course of our life in this world.

One of the great purposes of the Law of God was to reveal to the people of God the true nature of sin and teach them the appropriate spiritual response to sin. These sin offering laws accomplish that purpose by make the reality and affect of

sin very personal and very specific. This is a lesson many Christians struggle to learn even today. There is a common perspective in which the Christian accepts that Jesus died for their sins on the cross and never gives further thought to how their spiritual condition and relationship with the Lord is impacted by the individual sins they commit following their salvation. The Lord does want us to believe that we are saved from all of our sins because of the cross, but He also wants us to deal appropriately with each sin we commit as He convicts our heart.

The specific concern of the sin offering laws was to cover unintentional sins. There were two main categories for understanding sins in the Law; unintentional sins which are covered here, and defiant sins (Numbers 15:30) which are addressed later in the Law. An unintentional sin would be committed whenever a person transgressed the Law of God without realizing they had done so, or through a lack of knowledge. What is critical to understand is that like the principle which applies in our civil law, "ignorance of the law is no excuse." The good intentions of the person do not redefine their action from sin to mistake. Sin is a violation of God's boundaries for behavior and even if a person steps across His boundaries with a good attitude and intentions, he has still trespassed on God's holiness. Once that boundary has been crossed, the people of God cannot simply disregard their violation with a general reference to God being a forgiving God. Under the law of the sin offering each transgression was to be answered with the necessary sacrifice. The requirements of these laws showed in a vivid way that every sin impacts our lives and the lives of those we touch.

In this first of the sin offering laws the sins of the "anointed priest" are addressed. The anointed priest could possibly refer to any of the Levitical priests when they sinned, but it is more likely aimed at the necessary response of the high priest when he sinned. Remember when Aaron as the first high priest was first consecrated as high priest he was anointed with oil poured upon his head. If the high priest were to sin the impact on the entire holy nation would be great because he was the chosen representative of God for the entire nation in the tabernacle service. His sin spiritually polluted or defiled, not just his heart in private, but his ability to function in his office in the way that represented the Lord's holiness. The ceremony of the sin offering for the high priest reflects the pollution from his sin. A bull was required as a sacrifice for his sin because the bull was the most valuable possible sacrificial animal to offer. This points to the high cost to the nation of such a high level spiritual leader sinning.

The anointed priest who had sinned was to lay his hand on the bull to identify with it, then slay it himself, then take some of its blood and enter into God's holy place. He was to take some of the blood and sprinkle it seven times in front of the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Since the Lord's presence was in the Holy of Holies, this showed that the high priest's sin had penetrated into the tabernacle itself and threatened the covenant relationship with the Lord. Then he was to put some of the blood on the horns of the incense altar. The incense altar symbolized the prayers and worship of close fellowship with the

Lord. By smearing blood on those horns the symbol was that the blood of the sacrifice confirmed that fellowship with the Lord had been restored and that He would again hear the prayers of the high priest and receive his worship. As New Covenant priests of God, we should not neglect the effect our sins have upon our relationship with the Lord. When we sin, and when the Lord convicts our hearts, we should return each time to the cross and cry out to Him for the blood shed by Christ for us repair the damage we have caused to our most holy relationship.

***4:11-12 - "But the hide of the bull and all its flesh with its head and its legs and its entrails and its refuse, that is, all the rest of the bull, he is to bring out to a clean place outside the camp where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned."***

For the grain and the peace offerings the priests were allowed to eat from the sacrifices offered. For the sin offerings, the fat was removed and offered on the altar of sacrifice in the courtyard, but the remainder of the sacrifice was to be taken completely outside the courtyard of the Lord's house. It was also to be taken outside the camp of Israel. In each place they camped, there was a place outside the camp chosen to dump the ashes of the sacrifices burnt on the altar. The entire bull sacrificed as a sin offering was to be carried out to this place of ashes. There the priest that committed the sin was to build a fire and burn the entire sacrifice. None of the sacrifice was to be kept by the priest and eaten.

There are two important points made by this practice. First, sin does pollute our lives, and the sacrifice for sin was to be offered outside of the tabernacle and outside of the camp to show that God did not want any of the pollution from the sins of the people which was symbolically carried by the bull to stain the house of the Lord or the camp of the Lord. Second, the Lord did not want the priests to eat anything from this sin offering to demonstrate that there is no profit, no good thing that comes from sin. Eating from a sin offering would physically benefit the priest who ate, and the Lord wanted to show that sin produces no good benefit. We don't gain anything nourishing or strengthening to our lives by sinning.

***4:13-15, 22-23, 27-28 - "Now if the whole congregation of Israel commits error and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they commit any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and they become guilty; when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for a sin offering and bring it before the tent of meeting. Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slain before the LORD... When a leader sins and unintentionally does any one of all the things which the LORD his God has commanded not to be done, and he becomes guilty, if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a male without defect... Now if anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and becomes guilty, if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without defect, for his sin which he has committed."***

These three sections identify the differences in the laws of the sins offerings. Including the law aimed at the high priest we can see that there were a total of four categories of sin offerings. The four categories were the high priest, the nation of Israel, the leaders of Israel, and any individual person in Israel. The four categories were each given their own requirements and guidelines. For instance the sacrifice necessary for the sins of the high priest and the nation was a bull. However, for a leader a male goat was the appropriate sacrifice, while for any other individual Israelite a female goat was to be sacrificed. These differences were not intended to confuse God's people but teach them about the differences in sin depending upon who had committed the sin.

There is a common saying among Christians that "sin is sin." What is meant by this saying is that all sins are the same in the eyes of God with none worse than another. That saying is true in one specific sense, but in another way, it is false. The way in which it is true that God considers all sin the same is in the sense of how sin will be judged on the final day of judgment. When our lives are judged, any one sin will disqualify us from heaven when determining whether we have earned a place there by our own righteousness. Any one sin of any kind committed during the course of our life makes us a sinner. Whether that sin is murder, adultery, theft, lying, or idolatry we will be judged as a sinner. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the impact of sin upon our lives, our relationship with God, and the lives of others, some sins are worse than others. In this sense the sin of murder is more serious than the sin of lying. These sin offering laws are designed to show us that there is also a distinction between different people who sin depending upon their position or role. The sin of the high priest causes a greater spiritual pollution than the sin of another Israelite even if they commit the same sin. This was shown in requiring a more costly sacrifice for the high priest. This same principle is displayed whenever someone of high standing in our society falls in sin. If a famous Christian leader on television sins



it has a greater impact than if another Christian commits the same sin. This provides no excuse for those who are not prominent, but is meant to warn those who are prominent to guard their hearts from causing greater impact by their failures.

***4:35 - "Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offerings, and the priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar, on the offerings by fire to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin which he has committed, and he will be forgiven."***

Once the sin offering is sacrificed according to the instructions of the Lord atonement has been made for the person that sinned. He is also given the assurance that his sin has been forgiven. Forgiveness is one of the great and central principles of Christianity. We do not earn our relationship with the holy Lord, it is based upon our enjoyment of His forgiveness. The meaning of forgiveness is straightforward and simple. To forgive is to treat the person forgiven as though they had not sinned and committed an offence. When God forgives us He is choosing to treat us as though we had never violated His holiness and as if we had always remained as faithful to His law as Jesus Himself is. This is one of the awesome blessings of our salvation. Forgiveness is a choice that the Lord makes to restore us to the place of full fellowship with Him. However, His choice is not arbitrary, but based upon something. Biblical forgiveness is always 100% based upon sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice there is no forgiveness. If there is no forgiveness there is no fellowship with God. The Lord is a Lord of forgiveness, but never apart from the atonement accomplished by the shed blood and death of the sacrifice. God the Father forgives us and welcomes us back into fellowship with Himself, but only because Jesus died on the cross for us. Anyone who is convinced that they have been forgiven by God without the cross of Christ is deceived and will experience a rude awakening on the day of judgment.

---

## Leviticus 5

***5:1 - "Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration to testify when he is a witness, whether he has seen or otherwise known, if he does not tell it, then he will bear his guilt."***

The first thirteen verses of chapter five continue the focus on the sin offerings from chapter four. This section is treated differently as a kind of appendix to the description of the sin offering violations of chapter four. In this section four specific examples of additional kinds of transgressions that require a sin offering are covered. The listing of these examples show us that they function as what we would call case laws in our modern judicial system. The point is that God did not

provide an exhaustive list of every possible sin a person may commit in this category. Instead, He provided examples of these sins to teach Israel how to recognize this kind of sin in their own lives and to teach them the appropriate response when they sinned in this way. Even though the specifics no longer apply for us in this exact way, we are still meant to learn from these examples so that we can recognize the kinds of things God identifies as transgressions against His holy standards.

The first example given has to do with a legal concern affecting the community. The public adjuration referred to being placed under the obligations of an oath. In our court system, when a person is summoned into court to testify as a witness, they are first placed under oath to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." This law is concerned about such cases, but is even broader in its concerns. This law applied to more than specific witnesses summoned to testify. A leader of the community could call the entire community together in a legal case in which it was necessary to identify witnesses in order to render a proper verdict. If no witnesses had yet stepped forward, the leader could publicly adjure the entire community by an oath. This meant that the leader called on anyone within the community who had knowledge of the case to step forward to testify. The adjuration meant that the leader placed the community under obligation to the Lord to give testimony with the implication that the person that had relevant information about the case and chose to withhold it would be punished by the Lord for doing so. It is what we refer to as withholding evidence in our law system, and it still bears a penalty today, but the penalty in Israel was carried out by the Lord.

This law teaches us something about the importance the Lord places upon truth and justice. The person that withholds evidence usually does so for good reason in their own mind. They may fear retribution from the person against whom they are testifying, some social complication arising from their testimony, or it may be that the person who should testify does not wish for the person that is guilty to be punished in the way the law will require if they step forward. Whatever the motive for the person withholding their testimony, they are compelled by this law to see the imperative of truth and justice. The concerns of the truth outweigh any personal agenda or desire the witness may have. This teaches us that the knowledge of the truth brings with it an obligation. The truth is not ours to possess and use or withhold as we see fit to serve ourselves. The truth belongs to the Lord and we owe our testimony to the community for the sake of the Lord's justice.

Human justice is designed to reflect the greater justice of the Lord. The justice of the Lord is greater than human justice, among other reasons, because His justice is always based upon the fully known truth of each matter. Human justice as a reflection of the Lord's justice is dependant upon the full truth being made known in each case. If a person know the truth of a case and withholds their testimony,

and a judgment is rendered without that testimony, then the justice of the Lord has been subverted by being misrepresented.

***5:2-3 - "Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean cattle or a carcass of unclean swarming things, though it is hidden from him and he is unclean, then he will be guilty. Or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort his uncleanness may be with which he becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know it, he will be guilty."***

The second and third cases are covered in this section and both concern a person being rendered unclean by contact with something or someone unclean. When studying the laws of God concerned with being clean or unclean it is necessary to explain the differences in the way we use the term unclean today. If a person is unclean today, we are usually referring to their physical condition and how dirty they are. These laws addressing becoming unclean are not dealing with physical cleanliness and the necessary response when becoming unclean required more than some water and soap to remedy.

To be unclean meant that any Israelite had been rendered ceremonially unclean. It was a symbolic uncleanness and affected their ability to approach the Lord in the courtyard of the tabernacle. Until their unclean condition was remedied, their relationship with the Lord and the rest of the nation of Israel was compromised. Uncleanness affected even their relationship with other Israelites because uncleanness was transferable. Contact with anything or anyone that was categorized as unclean made the person who had touched the unclean thing or person unclean themselves. It was similar to the hygienic concern we hold in the case of a contagious disease. Recently there was a big news story of a man who was infected with tuberculosis, which is an airborne disease, flying on a plane and potentially infecting the entire plane load of people simply because they were all breathing the same re-circulated air in the plane. If you visit a person in the hospital with a serious contagious disease, you are required to wear special gloves and a surgical mask to avoid the transference of the contagion. The same principle was being demonstrated by the Lord in these laws. However, instead of physical diseases, the focus is spiritual. The deeper lesson, beneath the surface of these two laws is that sin is contagious. Sin has a dynamic effect in a person's life, and close contact can result in the transference from one person to another. The Lord was teaching this through a variety of circumstances.

If one person touched the carcass of an animal they became instantly ceremonially unclean. The symbolic connection is that death is the final outworking of sin. To touch death is in essence to touch the results of sin directly. The people of Israel were not to ignore the transferred effect of touching death, but respond to it by a restoration to a spiritually clean condition by offering a necessary sacrifice to the Lord. In the same way, touching a person that was already unclean transferred their uncleanness to the person that had touched

them. A person could be unclean for a number of reasons. These will be listed in greater detail in chapters 12-15, but included leprosy, previously touching any carcass, childbirth, menstruation, and a variety of other circumstances. Each one of these conditions were not chosen arbitrarily to represent a ceremonial unclean condition, but were each symbolically valuable to teach Israel about different aspects of the original fall into sin and its many effects.

***5:4-6 - "Or if a person swears thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, in whatever matter a man may speak thoughtlessly with an oath, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know it, he will be guilty in one of these. So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. He shall also bring his guilt offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin."***

The fourth and final example requiring a sin offering in this section is of a thoughtless oath. The taking of an oath was a very serious matter for anyone in the nation of Israel, because the Lord was considered to be present to hear the oath, and to hold the oath taker accountable to fulfill their oath. The standard that applied was that the person who swore the oath must fulfill it no matter what it cost them or what they might lose by fulfilling it. Because the standard for oaths was so high, it was wise to think carefully before swearing any oath and it was far better to refrain from swearing an oath than to swear and not keep it later. In spite of this, not everyone exercised such wisdom. When a person swore an oath to the Lord, or to another person, and later regretted doing so were they stuck in that circumstance forever without any recourse? In this law the Lord did hold the oath swearer accountable, but also gave a merciful provision through a sin offering to the person that failed to fulfill their oath. The passage describes that the oath in this case was hidden from the one who took it, and that later they came to know it. What is meant by this phrasing is that the person did not recognize the full implications of their oath at the moment they swore it and later came to realize just how much fulfilling it would cost them.

There is a new element introduced in the restoration process in this law. The person that has failed to fulfill their oath is to bring an offering to the Lord, but an additional requirement is added to the need for a sacrifice. The oath breaker is to "confess that in which he has sinned." Their confession is not optional. It is also not done in private between only themselves and the Lord. Of course all spiritual confession is first and foremost directed to the Lord, but this confession was to be done just before offering the sacrifice at the tabernacle in the presence of the priest who would receive the sacrifice. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." (James 5:16). Today, our confession is not directed toward a priest in the tabernacle, but in the context of an open sharing in our fellowship in the body of Christ as we testify to the Lord's

dealing with our heart to bring us from an area of darkness into His light. The point of confession to another person is not merely to make the situation as embarrassing as possible, but to provide a safeguard against future failure through the anchor of accountability to another in the Christian community.

The idea of confessing the sin is more than just reciting what was done that violated the Lord's standard. Biblical confession carries the sense of agreeing out loud with what the Lord says about our actions and or words. Confession is an important expression of a true repentance, which means to change both what we think about what we have done, how we describe it to others, and how we behave in that area in the future. This testimony of David's from the Psalms shows this heart of repentance in an expression of confession. "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah." (Psalm 32:1-5). The confession of David is the necessary and appropriate outcome of a new heart conviction of repentance toward his sin. However, for David, and for us, repentance and confession is not a result of a human born sudden inclination to be a better person. David experienced the pressure of the hand of the Lord on his heart convicting him of his sin and moving him to repent and confess. We can be confident in any area in which we have fallen into sin that the Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts to restore us from the effect of that sin.

---

## Leviticus 6

***6:1-5 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering. Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt."***

This section addresses four neighbor violations that require a guilt offering at the altar in the tabernacle. These are neighbor violations because they each involve various sins of theft by one person against another. The four violations are a deception regarding a personal security deposit, a robbery, a extortion and a deception regarding found property belonging to the neighbor. Again, like we saw in the previous chapter, these are not the only four ways to steal from a neighbor, but are examples of that category of sin represented in the Eighth Commandment. This section is a more detailed explanation of the Commandment number eight with examples of the kind of violations that constitute stealing in the Lord's eyes, and also what is the necessary response of the thief in order to be restored to right relationship within God's holy nation.

The first principle emphasized is easy to overlook but critical to a right understanding of the nature and effect of sin. These sins of stealing in their various forms are identified first as sins "against the Lord." This does not mean that the theft is not a sin against the neighbor who was victimized in the theft, but that the Lord wants His people to first recognize that he is not left out of this circumstance. The clear implication is that if I steal even a single dollar from you, that I have not just affected my relationship toward you, I have affected my relationship toward the Lord. Any theft from anyone in Israel was a theft from the Lord Himself. Of course, I may think when I steal from you that I have successfully hidden it from you and gotten away with it, but nothing is hidden from the Lord and He will hold me accountable for how I transgressed against you whether you know what I have done or not. A person may steal from their neighbor and outwardly maintain the image of righteousness, but the Lord will not accept or ignore the sin. The Lord will maintain the pressure of convicting guilt upon their heart until the guilty person repents and seeks restoration.

In order to be restored the guilty thief must address his sin both toward the Lord and toward the person from whom he stole. The necessary response to be restored to right relationship with the Lord is to bring a guilt offering for his sin to the Lord. However, there is an interesting order to this offering that at first seems out of order. The Lord commanded that the guilt offering was not accepted from the thief and therefore there was no possible forgiveness and restoration for him until he first made things right with the victim of his crime. Ordinarily we think in terms of the proper order of repentance being to first express our repentance to the Lord, and then go and express our repentance to our neighbor. The Lord flips that order and requires that the thief first show his repentance to the person he sinned against. This was even to be done on the same day that he intended to make a guilt offering to the Lord. What the Lord required of the thief to be restored to his neighbor was more than a sincere apology. Saying, "I'm sorry" could of course be included in his repentance, but by itself was an insufficient expression. What was required toward the neighbor was restitution. This meant that the thief was to return to the person from whom they stole everything that was stolen, plus an additional 20% was to be added to what was returned.

We see this principle on display in the New Testament in the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." (Matthew 5:23-24). The Lord wants the one who has sinned to be restored to Him, but He makes their response to their neighbor the test of whether their repentance is genuine or not. We have a famous example of this kind of genuine repentance on display in the life of Zaccheus. "Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham." (Luke 19:8-9). The heart of Zaccheus was so impacted by his encounter with Jesus that he came under full conviction for his pattern of taking more as a tax collector that was required to keep for himself. Interestingly, the Romans who imposed the taxes recruited tax collectors from among the Jews and allowed them to keep an extra portion for themselves as long as Caesar received what he required. This violated the Law of God, however, and Zaccheus was moved to true repentance for having extorted too much tax. The Law only required he restore the portion he extorted plus 20%, but in his sincere desire to show his changed heart Zaccheus promised to repay four times as much as he took.

Then, once the restitution to the neighbor was made, the one who had stolen was now free to approach the Lord with a guilt offering. This offering symbolically expressed the payment of the debt incurred by the theft just like the 20% restitution had represented that debt to the neighbor. The reason a sacrifice was required toward the Lord, rather than a 20% payment is that our sins produce a debt to the Lord greater than we can pay. The debt our sins create can only be satisfied by death. This is why the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is prophetically identified by Isaiah as a guilt offering to the Lord (Isaiah 53:10). In other words, the death of Jesus

This 20% or one fifth restitution requirement was righteous and wise. It was a fair payment to the victim of not only their original property but an amount representing what they would have gained with it had it not been stolen from them. It also served as a serious fine for the thief and taught the needed lesson in an economically impacting way that stealing is not profitable, and only costs the thief more in the end. It also served as a true deterrent for others that were tempted to steal but who saw with their own eyes the added cost of the restitution. It is worth noting that no jail sentence was attached to this crime or its punishment. If the thief were sent to jail, they would sit in an unproductive circumstance and they would not be changed by the punishment, not would the victim receive any benefit. Additionally, the entire society would lose by having to support the thief for the duration of their sentence. In a choice between the Lord's way of dealing with theft crimes and the way our society has chosen to deal with them, I have to choose the Lord's way as far more productive and redemptive.

**6:8-13 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law for the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself shall remain on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire on the altar is to be kept burning on it. The priest is to put on his linen robe, and he shall put on undergarments next to his flesh; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire reduces the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar. 'Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out, but the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay out the burnt offering on it, and offer up in smoke the fat portions of the peace offerings on it. Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out.'"**

The remainder of chapter six is divided into sections giving the laws of the burnt offerings and the grain offerings. The laws for those offerings were already given in detail in chapters one and two. This section is not a simple repetition of the earlier laws, but a restatement of those laws from a new perspective. In the earlier chapters the laws of these two offerings were given from the perspective of the person who was bringing the offering to the Lord. Now, the same offering laws are given with the new focus of the role of the Levitical priest who receives the offering and presents it to the Lord. Traditionally, rabbis have interpreted this section as a kind of rule book for the priesthood to instruct them in how to make these offerings to the Lord.

The primary concern of the Lord in the burnt offering in regard to the responsibility of the priests had to do with the fire on the altar. The Lord did not even address the requirement for the maintenance of the fire in the earlier description of the burnt offering because the people of Israel had no responsibilities in the tabernacle. Here though, in the guidelines for the priests, the fire on the altar is their chief responsibility. They were to make sure the fire on the altar was never extinguished. The Lord's concern is repeated a few times to make sure the priests do not neglect the fire. What was it about the fire that made it so important to keep burning? There were two reasons why the Lord wanted the fire on the altar to be maintained continuously.

The first reason was the source of the fire upon the altar. We will see in the next few chapters that when the first of the burnt offerings was offered unto the Lord upon the altar that the Lord consumed the sacrifice by fire that came forth from Himself. It was the responsibility of the priests to maintain the fire of the Lord upon the altar as a continuous reminder that the fire of the altar was heavenly. The second reason the Lord commanded them to keep the altar fire burning was the ultimate symbolic connection of the altar. The altar of sacrifice points forward as a type to the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. It was important for the altar and its fire to represent the purpose of the cross. Jesus died upon the cross as the once for all time sacrifice for all of our sins. Once He dies upon the cross, He is never again offered in sacrifice for all of eternity (Hebrews 7:27). However, His



sacrifice has a constantly continuing saving effect. The cross did not just provide a sacrifice for the sins we had committed up until the moment we believed. The cross is a constant provision of God's mercy and grace for us day by day. There will never be a moment when we approach God trusting in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and discover that the fire of that heavenly altar has been extinguished and no longer answers the need of our sin.