

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 1

THE LAW OF THE BURNT OFFERING

The first section of Leviticus covers chapters 1-7. We find five principal offerings outlined: Burnt offering, Grain offering, Peace offering, Sin offering, Trespass offering. In chapters 6-7 we have priestly regulations regarding these offerings.

A twofold division is evident: 1. The first three offerings are voluntary and teach the worshipper how to maintain fellowship with God. 2. The last two are compulsory and teach the worshipper how to restore broken fellowship with God.

The burnt offering was the most frequently offered sacrifice, routinely offered at the start and twilight of each day (Lev 6v8-13; Ex 29v38-43; Num 28v3-6). It was the only offering that was laid wholly on the altar and was totally consumed by fire. It was the most ancient of the sacrifices. Noah brought this offering and so did Abraham (Gen 8v20; 22v13).

Outline of Chapter One

Introduction v1,2.

Leviticus opens with a very solemn introduction. Normally we read of God speaking to Moses but here "He called to Moses" as well as "spoke to him". This call is not a call to service, but a summons that introduces special revelation. The words called and spoke emphasize the importance of the communication. God called to him to reveal more fully how Israel should live, in order to enjoy continuing fellowship with Him.

Ritual v2b - 17

The Victim The victim may come from the herd (v3-9) or the flock (10-13) or may even be a bird (14-17). The burnt offering could be offered by anyone, irrespective of their gender or social standing. "His grace is inclusive and His welcome wide". This however, did not mean that God could be worshipped on the cheap! The animal chosen had to be a domestic animal, a male without defect. David later testified, "I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing. (Mal 1v7,13)

The Worshipper The worshipper was actively involved in the sacrifice. He had to choose the animal, bring it to the sanctuary, kill it, skin it, wash the dirty parts, and chop it up. In the case of the birds he had to remove its crop and contents and split the bird open.

The significance of the burnt offering It was "to make atonement" (v4). Atonement = "to cover" Heb. The last two offerings dealt with specific sins but the burnt offering dealt with sin in general. Even our worship is tainted with sin and needs cleansing. The act of pressing the hand on the head of the animal indicated that it was a substitute for the life of the worshipper. The burnt offering produced "a sweet aroma to the LORD" (1v9,13,17) which satisfied and appeased God's holy wrath against sin.

The Burnt Offering and the N.T

1. It points to the sacrifice of Christ. Paul speaks of Christ's self-giving love for us in Eph 5v2. Peter similarly uses the model of the burnt offering to draw attention to Jesus Christ "as a lamb without blemish or spot" But the typical significance is brought out in Hebrews. Hebrews 10 5-7 quotes Psalm 40v6-8. Jesus was the consummate and flawless whole burnt sacrifice, who offered himself in total obedience and consecration to God.

2. It points to the service of the believer. We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12v1) This one life must be daily laid on the altar and totally consecrated to God.