

# Making Reparations

## The Guilt/Reparation Offering

**Leviticus 5:14** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>15</sup> If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering.

<sup>16</sup> He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.

<sup>17</sup> "If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.

<sup>18</sup> He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven.

<sup>19</sup> It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD.

**Leviticus 6:1** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>2</sup> If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor

<sup>3</sup> or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely-- in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby--

<sup>4</sup> if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found

<sup>5</sup> or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.

<sup>6</sup> And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering.

<sup>7</sup> And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty.

(Lev 5:14-6:7)

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## A Broken Egg

There is nothing funny about our text, so I wanted to lighten the mood just a little to prepare you for the application at the end. This week I heard a bit on the moral in nursery rhymes by comedian Ricky Gervais. He can't understand what possible moral Humpty Dumpty<sup>1</sup> could ever have to a five-year-old.

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall  
All the King's horses and all the King's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again*

“All I can think is, don't sit on a wall if you're an egg. But how is that applicable to a five-year-old *human*? You're

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<sup>1</sup> This analogy is also found in Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 135.

telling the story to a group of little kids, “Don’t sit on the wall if you’re an egg.” “What? What do you mean if I’m an egg? None of us are eggs.” But even then, it wouldn’t make sense even to an egg. You go up to an egg, “Don’t sit on a wall.” The egg is like, “What do you mean? I can’t hear you. I’ve got no ears. I’ve got nothing. I’ve got no eyes; I can’t see any wall. What’s a wall, I’ve got no brain? I’m an egg. I’ve got no legs; I can’t climb the wall.”

Maybe the moral is, “**Don’t send horses to perform medical procedures.**” Of course they couldn’t put him together again! They’ve got no dexterity whatsoever. They can’t sew to save their life. They got no thumbs, no opposable thumbs. Send a horse? We’ve got an egg. A cracked egg and we send a horse? Definitely not. Have you got a doctor or someone who works for Faberge? Don’t send a horse. We’ve got like a half a ton creature with no fingers. No. No chance. They couldn’t put on scrubs and wash up. Imagine there’s an egg. A delicate egg. Horse comes over. Splat. If I had to design the perfect egg crushing devise, it would be a hoof. It doesn’t matter whether it’s the king’s horses or not. Certainly, don’t send all of them. That’s going to be chaos!

Or maybe, “**If your surname is Dumpty, don’t name your kid Humpty.**” What sort of a stigma is that, for a kid that’s

already an egg? That kid is going to be teased his entire life. I bet he jumped off the wall.

It's a hilarious routine, especially because the rhyme is pretty ridiculous. But is it *that* hard to figure out the moral? Of course not. Sometimes things get so broken that once they are in this state of disrepair, they cannot be acceptably fixed. No one could put the egg back together again. It simply isn't possible. We do things, bad things. Things against God. Things against our neighbor. But I think a lot of times, people do not stop to think of the harm they do. Well, God does. He does think about it and he makes laws to help curb our natural propensity to damaging and breaking things, be it without knowledge or deliberately.

## The Guilt Offering

We have looked now at four different offerings that begin the book of Leviticus. It began with a burnt offering (*'olah*), which ends up being a pleasing aroma to the LORD. Burnt offerings cleanse sacred space and make the worshiper fit to be in God's presence. Next came the grain offering (*minḥah*), which became a meal for the priests to

help sustain them. This is an offering you bring out of thanksgiving. The third offering is the **peace offering** (*zebah shelamim*), and we saw that more than anything, the Lord's Supper relates to this one as it is a true sacrifice that becomes a meal for all parties involved. Fourth was the ESV's "sin offering" which most scholars today say is better translated as a **purification offering** (*hatta 't*), since it is often performed when no sin is involved. This was the first mandatory offering in the book, as it dealt with unintentional sins and then sins of omission. Through the sprinkling of blood on the horns of the altar, both the space and the persons would be atoned.

We move now to the **fifth offering**, which is also mandatory. The ESV calls it the "**guilt**" offering. This comes from a word (*'asham*) we saw earlier in Leviticus 5 which meant in that context **to feel guilty**. Feeling guilty and confessing one's sin was mandatory for offering what really was still a specific case of the purification offering. Nevertheless, it is this idea of guilt that becomes **the bridge** between that offering and the one we are looking at now.

The passage is **Leviticus 5:14-6:7**. This is a rather arbitrary looking section of text, beginning as it does halfway into one chapter and not finishing until well into the next.

In this regard, Jewish English Bibles actually have this all marked out as Leviticus 5 as they count the verses differently (Lev 5:14-26 as opposed to 5:14-19 and 6:1-7).

The passage is clearly divided into two sections which I suppose becomes the reason for the different numbering systems. They are, in fact, divided between these two halves, each of which begins, “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying...” (5:14; 6:1). The first half deals with sins of “misuse of property belonging to God” (5:14-19) and the second half the “misuse of human property through misuse of God’s name in an oath” (6:1-7).<sup>2</sup> Bonar calls them “Fraud towards God in respect to things in his worship” and “Fraud towards man,” which consists of instances of wrong done through both the first and second tables of the law.<sup>3</sup>

### *Fraud towards God*

The first section is marked out, like those in ch. 4 as “unintentional” sins. It is called “a breach of faith”, though also unintentional. And it concerns “the holy things of the LORD” (Lev 5:14). The ESV’s “breach of faith” (*mā’al*) is

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<sup>2</sup> Gane, 133.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew A. Bonar, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus, Expository and Practical* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851), 104.

variously translated as “commits a fraud” (Neofiti), “cheats by benefiting from” (Pseudo-Jonathan), “unaware of something done inadvertently” (LXX), “sins through a mistake” (Vulgate), “commits a trespass” (old English and many Jewish translations), “acts unfaithfully” (NAS). That’s quite a range of interpretation.

Wenham shows that it translates anything from adultery (Num 5:12), worshiping false gods (Num 31:16); marrying foreigners (Ezra 10:2), Achan’s sin of stealing (Josh 7:1), or Uzziah’s sin when he insisted on offering incense in the temple (2Chr 26:16, 18).<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the single best word for this is “*sacrilege*.” Many people use this word as a synonym for blasphemy, but it isn’t the same. “Sacrilege” is the legal term for the wrong that is restored by the reparation offering (Lev 5:15, 21; Num 5:6: cf. Ezra 10:10, 19). Its antonym is “sanctify,” as it says in Deuteronomy, “you committed sacrilege against me ... you did not sanctify me” (Deut 32:51).<sup>5</sup> Goldingay explains of these other places the word is found, “They have encroached

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<sup>4</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 106.

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 51. This is Milgrom’s interpretation of the verse, “because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel” (Deut 32:51).



on something belonging to Yhwh; they have committed sacrilege. Achan did so at Ai in taking from what belongs to Yhwh; King Uzziah did so in offering incense in the temple (Josh 7:1; 2 Chron 26:16). The men of the Second Temple community did so in mixing holy seed with the local peoples (Ezra 9:1–2; cf. Ezra 10:19 for the reparation offering that follows). The action of Eli’s sons (1 Sam 2:12–17) is not described as *ma‘al*, but would count as a shocking example. So would any withholding of due offerings.”<sup>6</sup>

The common denominator of all instances of **sacrilege is sin against God**. Our passage falls into two major categories of these, which correspond to our two sections: the sacrilege against **sacred space (5:14-19)** and the violation of the **sacred oath, i.e. the Name of God (6:1-7)**. In the first section, it isn’t talking about adultery or idolatry or mixed marriages, but to God’s sanctuary stuff (his tabernacle and accessories, his space, etc.). In Leviticus 22, this includes especially **eating** things dedicated to God and not for you. **Calvin** gives an example of eating produce that has been dedicated as tithe or firstfruits and calls it defrauding God of His right in any oblation (i.e. offering). In Leviticus 27 it includes things a

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<sup>6</sup> **John Goldingay**, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Life*, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 145.



man dedicates to the LORD such as **people (27:2-8)**, **animals (9-13)**, his **house (14-15)**, his **land (16-23)**.<sup>7</sup> It could include things like **breaking a religious utensil** or making **secular use of a stone of the sanctuary**, in other words, benefitting from something that is the LORD's and not theirs.<sup>8</sup> This fits well with what find in the second section directed at your neighbor.

The point is, the person is not treating God's things, and thus God himself, as holy. That's sacrilege. And it is a sin that **almost no one today takes seriously**, because few think that the NT God has a right to call anything his. But if you are married in the LORD, your spouse belongs to him. If you claim to be offering up the incense of prayers on someone's behalf and you are not, you are committing sacrilege. If you keep back some of the proceeds of a sale of land, much less lie about giving the money to the LORD, you have stolen from him, as Ananias and Saphira (**Acts 5:1-10**) found

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<sup>7</sup> **Wenham**, 106.

<sup>8</sup> "When a person commits a trespass, sinning against any of the Lord's sacred things:" Might one suppose that the law covers one who damages the Holy Thing, not the one who derives benefit from it, [e.g., one who breaks a cultic utensil] or the one who derives benefit from it, not the one who damages it, [for instance, one who makes secular use of a stone of the sanctuary], that which is not yet plucked up from the ground [e.g., making use of the floor of the sanctuary for one's private benefit], or an agent who has correctly accomplished his assignment [who would be obligated to an offering, while the one who sent him would not] [cf. T. Me. 2:1A-I]? (*m. Meilah* 5,1) in **Jacob Neusner**, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 22b (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 58.

out the hard way. Yes, this sin is **still very much real**, even if we don't have a physical temple to go to. This is because we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit and indeed, we belong to the LORD, which has applications that extend to everything we do—from how we spend our **time** to how we use our **talent** to how we deal with our **treasures**. But let's look at the law before we start thinking about these things.

Such a serious crime as one committed against the Almighty can, at best, only **begin to be repaired** through this offering. It's a start at putting Humpty back together. It has **two parts** to it. The first is the **animal**. “**He shall bring to the LORD as his *compensation*, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering**” (**Lev 5:15**). The word “**compensation**” is a word we saw last time (**5:6-7**). But this time, the animal is **a ram**, the most expensive offering you could bring. It has to be **unblemished** and come from **their own flock**. This is called God's compensation for the wrong done to him. He is the highest and greatest possible being, only the best possible offering can be acceptable to him to repay what was treaded upon, broken, abused, or stolen—the sacrilege. But remember, this is all under the condition that it

is *unintentional*! This section of the offering is not allowable when this has been done deliberately and with malice.

The second part is that he has to “**make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest.**” If you broke a bronze spoon, the temple would know its worth, and you would have to pay it back times 20%. Only then shall the priest “**make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven**” (16). In other words, in this offering, it isn’t enough to offer the expensive animal. If there was no paying back the wrong, there was no forgiveness or atonement to be found. As Bonar soberly says, “**Atonement must consist—1. Of restitution of the principle—restoring all that was lost ... 2. Of the addition of more. There must be also a making up of the wrong done, by the person suffering loss, as a recompense for the evil.**”<sup>9</sup>

**Vs. 17** somehow expands the crime saying, “**any of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.**”<sup>10</sup> It is tempting to think that this expands it to include any commandment whatsoever that you

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<sup>9</sup> **Andrew A. Bonar**, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus, Expository and Practical* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851), 107.

<sup>10</sup> See the parallel in **Numbers 5:5-8**.

do not know you are violating. But that goes against the general point that this deals with violations of God's stuff. I found no commentator that said this.

Rather, the focus seems to be on the language, “**though he did not know it.**” The Rabbis believed the difference between this and the previous statement is that the earlier one the person knew for certain that it was wrong, but in this one, they never know for sure. They only suspect an offense, but have no positive way of figuring it out.<sup>11</sup> They become conscience stricken (i.e. they feel guilt, hence guilt offering, which we have seen is here, but not the main point), and so they go to offer this very expensive sacrifice.

Why would you do that? Because in the ancient world, this was **a terrible thing**. One Babylonian “**Prayer to Every God,**” chants its words in terror, “**The sin which I have done, indeed I do not know. The forbidden thing which I have eaten, indeed I do not know. The prohibited (place) on which I have set foot, indeed I do not know.**”<sup>12</sup> The modern commentary on this says, “**This prayer is addressed to no particular god, but to all gods in general, even those who**

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<sup>11</sup> **Baruch A. Levine**, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 32.

<sup>12</sup> **Jacob Milgrom**, *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 77.

may be unknown. The purpose of the prayer is to claim relief from suffering, which the writer understands is the result of some infraction of divine law. He bases his claim on the fact that his transgressions have been committed unwittingly, and that he does not even know what god he may have offended. Moreover, he claims, the whole human race is by nature ignorant of the divine will, and consequently is constantly committing sin. He therefore ought not to be singled out for punishment.”<sup>13</sup> The gods would send plagues and leprosy and famine and other things that caused people throughout the ancient world to be terrified of sacrilege and not even knowing what they had done.

God is not like the gods. He tells people explicitly so that they might not sin in these ways. Think about Moses and Joshua in light of that prayer. “Take off your shoes, for the place you are standing on is holy ground” (Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15). If God had not told them, they still would be treading on holy ground and would owe God a reparation offering. But he did tell them.

Deuteronomy 29:27-29 says, “The anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses

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<sup>13</sup> F. J. Stephens, “Prayer to Every God,” in James Bennett Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 391.

written in this book, and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day. The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Those at Qumran by the Dead Sea interpreted this, “For [the wicked] are not included in his covenant since they have neither sought nor examined his decrees in order to know the hidden matters in which they err by their own fault and because they treated revealed matters with disrespect; this is why wrath will rise up for judgment in order to effect revenge by the curses of the covenant, in order to administer fierce punishments for everlasting annihilation without there being any remnant” (1QS 5.11-12).<sup>14</sup> In other words, God wrote down what was a violation. You could know, if you really wanted to.

But in his grace, in **Leviticus 5:17-19**, the LORD provides a way whereby someone who hasn't searched out the matters like the priests did, who has sinned and didn't know it for sure but was feeling guilt, **could be remedied**. What he

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<sup>14</sup> Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (translations)” (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–1998), 81.



must do is “realize his guilt” (i.e. feel guilty) and “bear his iniquity” (Lev 5:17). How?

Again, with a ram without blemish from the flock. This is the only animal that will suffice for this offering. This one does not make allowances for the poor. Sin is sin, no exceptions. However, if he did not have one, he could offer its monetary equivalent in silver (18), “and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven.” Why? “It is a reparation offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD” (19).

Someone gives the following analogy of this hefty price for a sin that you didn’t even know was being committed. “I am reminded of the time I failed to pick up a toll ticket as I entered Highway 80/90 on the way to Chicago. When I reached the toll booth at the other end without a ticket to show how far I had come, I was required to pay the maximum toll because I could have come the maximum distance.”<sup>15</sup> Failing to pay a road toll is a trifle compared to failing to care for the LORD’s holy things. But the analogy of paying the maximum helps you see its seriousness. Poor, rich, it matters not.

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<sup>15</sup> Gane, 134.



## *Fraud towards Man*

The second half of our passage deals with **fraud towards man**. It begins again, “**The LORD spoke to Moses, saying...**” (**Lev 6:1**). But now notice both the shift away from God, but also the focus that is still one God in terms of **the oath**. Then, also notice that there is no possible way that the person committing this list of sins could do it unintentionally. “**If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely-- in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby—**” (**Lev 6:2-3**).

Here, four sins are mentioned.

- Deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security
- Robbing your neighbor
- Oppressing your neighbor
- Lying to your neighbor about something he lost that you knew was his

Usually, this kind of thing was dealt with in civil courts (**Ex 22:1-15**), and so the sacrificial system would not come into

play. But there is one thing that holds them all together. It is the language, “swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby” (Lev 6:3). Swearing falsely is not a fifth sin, but the one sin that binds them all together. Swearing falsely is the sacrilege, a trodden down of God’s holy Name. Therefore, the crime is both against the neighbor and is “a breach of faith” (sacrilege) against the LORD.

What is to be done about it? The same as before. First, he has sinned (Lev 6:4). Second, he realizes his guilt (4). Third, he swears to “restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt” (4-5). 20% is a hefty tax, but rarely comes close to matching the damage done to the other person by the crime itself. Nevertheless, it is expensive and rightly so and as such it is a type.

Then, as before, he has to bring to the priest as a compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its monetary equivalent, for a reparation offering (6). Then, the priest makes atonement for him before the

LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty (7).

## The Reparation Offering Today

### *Sacrilege Is Still Possible*

There are all kinds of things we need to think about in terms of how this offering is relevant to us in the New Testament era. Perhaps the first is the violation and treading down of holy things. This is what unbelievers do. For example, “They will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months” (Rev 11:2 NAS). My take on this is that the 42 months refers to the millennium, the period of time between the first and second comings of Jesus. In other words, this is what unbelievers do throughout the church age. That is exactly how the Jews at Qumran saw it too. It is the wicked who tread holy things under their feet.

Yet, *Christians can do this too*. This is the reason, in fact, why Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. They were Christians. They went to heaven. But they trampled holy things under their feet. Moses stood on the very Rock of Christ and struck it (Num

20:11-12; Deut 32:51); he wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land. David somehow profaned the armies of the LORD and was punished with three days of pestilence in the land (2Sa 24:13). The Corinthians were committing sacrilege against the Lord's Supper in their behavior towards one another and were being judged for it (1Co 11:25-30). Hebrews warns Christians, "How much more do you think he will be considered worthy of severer punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:29).<sup>16</sup> The punishment in mind seems to be just like these others, **temporal rather than eternal**. God does physically judge Christians, even if he will not eternally condemn us. This is to teach you both the seriousness of sacrilege and the only hope of ever possibly receiving full atonement and forgiveness for it.

### *Christ Gave the Perfect Reparation*

Because this is true, before any further application is to be found, we must **funnel this offering through the NT lens**

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<sup>16</sup> On this translation see David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 524. On it being temporal rather than eternal punishment see Allen and see my sermon "What If I Sin Deliberately?" on Hebrews 10:26-39.

of Christ. While not mentioned by name, the reparations offering has a fulfillment in the value of the compensation paid to the LORD. You really need to consider that sacrilege against a holy God, as we have defined it here, cannot possibly be paid by offering a ram, even if it is valuable and even if it is perfect.

The damage done is Humpty Dumpty falling splat off the wall to the hard pavement below. The relationship, the harm, the sin, the destruction is so utterly broken that it cannot be put back together again. You cannot fix what you have broken. And any offerings you would give to God would be at the best be but tokens. Offerings do not repair the damage; they only compensate a little. Do you suppose that your neighbor, let alone God, would really be appeased if you just gave them 20% more than what you took after lying, deceiving, oppressing, all to your own gain and their harm? Would they trust you? Why should they? Especially what if you only did it because you thought that's all that mattered—the offering? But even if it comes from the heart, does a ram and 20% really put Humpty together again? “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4).

This is why there is a very important thing found in **Lev 5:15**. It says, “**according to the shekel of the sanctuary.**” The idea is that the tabernacle and its precincts would have fair weights and measures. There would be no defrauding. And, it would determine the reparation. Under the old Levitical covenant to which people were bound for trespassing against holy things, it is was God set the compensation price. He did what he did because he looked into the future, as **Romans 3:25-26** says, and in his forbearance passed over former sins, giving them a token that they would understand, but doing it so that he might truly show his righteousness at the present time to the one who have faith in Jesus.

Andrew Bonar puts it this way. “**In these two provisions, do we not see set forth in symbol the great fact that God in atonement must get back all the honor that his law lost for a time by man’s fraud; and also must have the honor of his law farther vindicated by the payment of an amount of suffering? The *active* obedience of Christ [gets his honor back]; his *passive* obedience [vindicates his law].**<sup>17</sup>

He further asks us to **consider the value of the sanctuary measure** of the compensation. “**It was not every offering that will answer the great end; it must be a costly, precious**

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<sup>17</sup> **Bonar**, 107.

offering—the precious blood of the Son of God (1Pet 1:19). Who can tell how high it was estimated in the sanctuary above, where not one spot of sin ever found a rest in the most secret heart of one ministering spirit? The question is asked, ‘Is this *one offering* sufficient for the sinner?’ The Holy One applies the test of his law, and measures it by his own holy nature, and finds it such that he declares, ‘I am well pleased;’ ‘I lay in Zion a tried stone;’ ‘He has magnified the law, and made it honorable.’”<sup>18</sup>

Thus, when you acknowledge that you have broken the egg, you must look not to the king’s men, and certainly not the king’s horses, but to the sacrifice of **the King’s Son** to put everything back together again. He can complete our unfinished business because he is “**the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End**” (Rev 22:13).<sup>19</sup> Here is how I think Paul may have been reflecting upon our offering in light of the grace of God in Christ. “Formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted **ignorantly in unbelief**, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me

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<sup>18</sup> Bonar, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Gane, 135. I don’t like the way Gane puts the whole quotation, because it feels like a mixture of our works plus Christ’s. So I’m not putting it in quotes.



with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1Ti 1:13-14).

Only upon looking first and last to the sacrifice of Jesus to make reparations for you, to be the compensation that appeases God, does any kind of **application** make sense. You will see why as you consider the seriousness of what we will now say.

### *Pay Back What You have Stolen*

First, when you look to Christ, these other applications follow necessarily, even as the law itself shows us. Patrick Fairbairn in his book on typology puts it this way:

We find ... mention frequently enough made of sin as a debt incurred toward God, rendering the sinner liable to the exaction of a suitable recompense to the offended justice of Heaven. This satisfaction it is possible for him to pay **only in the person of his substitute**, the Lamb of God, whose blood is so infinitely precious, that it is amply sufficient to cancel, in behalf of every believer, the guilt of numberless transgressions. But while this one ransom alone can satisfy for man's guilt the injured claims of God's law of holiness, **wherever**

the sin committed assumes the form of a wrong done to a fellow-creature, God justly demands, as an indispensable condition of His granting an acquittal in respect to the higher province of righteousness, that the sinner show his readiness to make reparation in this lower province, which lies within his reach.<sup>20</sup>

What did **Zacchaeus** do? “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘To-day salvation has come to this house’” (**Luke 19:8-9**). What does our Lord tell us in his great sermon? “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (**Matt 5:23-24**). This is what the reparation offering means in light of the new covenant and the grace of Jesus Christ offered through his infinite compensation. This is *law on this side of the gospel*, even as it was foreshadowed in the law of old that you came because of **your guilty conscience** to repair damage you had done,

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<sup>20</sup> **Patrick Fairbairn**, *The Typology of Scripture: Viewed in Connection with the Whole Series of the Divine Dispensations*, vol. 2 (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1900), 301–302.

knowing that **God would be appeased by his grace**. This is what it means to read something like Romans 6 in light of our offering. Rather than abuse the instrument of the tabernacle and commit sacrilege by using it in an unholy way, you “offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (**Rom 6:13** NIV).

There are a couple of other points I wish to bring out of this passage. I’ll deal with them in the order in which they appear in our text. The first is **reparations**. Zacchaeus shows how biblical reparations are made. *He* defrauded, *he* lied, *he* deceived, *he* stole. But he did not pay back merely what the law demanded (20%); he said he would pay back 400%! That is the heart of making reparations. *I did it. I will pay back over and beyond what will hurt me.*

### *Understanding “Reparations” Correctly*

But we are living in a day when these words “reparations” or “restitution” are being profoundly abused. The concept of restitution is at the heart of this law. I was once on a board of a Christian organization that was involved in what I and many others believed were some pretty shady, back-room, political shenanigans. Several of us got together

to try to bring that to light. For our work, several of us were immediately voted off the board and one fellow demanded **that we make reparations** to them for all the harm we had supposedly done to them! That's not how reparations work in the Scripture. You don't get to commit horrible acts against a man and then when he calls you out on it demand that he has to make restitution to you! That's how wars start, not forgiveness.

Second, there is much being made in **social justice circles** of paying restitution. However, in those circles, it is not the one who has sinned through sacrilege or defrauding or stealing who has to make reparations. It is anyone they subjectively deem as belonging to the wrong group of people who must. And if they do not, then they are considered the enemy. This is not biblical justice either. To force *groups* to pay restitution **violates both the heart of the law** that they come of their own guilty conscience and that they have **actually done something wrong**, even if they don't know what it is. That is biblical restitution. The other is wickedness. So, beware how this kind of thinking about reparations. Because if we want to talk about Humpty Dumpty, this is a cracked egg that can't be put back together.

## *Intentional and Unintentional Sacrilege*

A second application is this idea of **violating holy things** unintentionally, completely unknowingly, or even deliberately. On one hand, it doesn't matter. Sacrilege deals with God's things, things that are his, that belong to him. To abuse them or break them is to profane or destroy his property. To tread on them is to trespass. To use them to your own advantage when they belong to him is to steal. Whether you meant it on purpose or not.

Now, the law of sacrilege where only God has been offended **only works for unintentional and unknown sins**. There was no remedy in this life for someone who did this deliberately. You can see this in the story of **Achan** who took some of the devoted things, thereby committing sacrilege. But for Achan, there was no sacrifice for sin. There was only punishment of stoning. He was put to death. The NT equivalent is **Ananias and Saphira**. They did something similar, withholding something pledged to God, and keeping it for themselves. On top of it, they swore they hadn't done it but were caught in the lie. For it, God punished them with death. That's NT.

Many people think this means these people were not saved. But that doesn't necessarily follow. They may not have been. But they may have been. The punishment in both cases is *physical death*. Yes, that is a picture of spiritual death, but the question of whether or not these people also had this happen to them is another issue.

The point is, like the Corinthians, if God wants, he can judge you in this life even if you are a Christian, for doing this deliberately. It's up to him. This is what Hebrews means when it says, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries" (Heb 10:26-27). This isn't talking eternal judgment, but temporal, like at Corinth or with Ananias and his wife. *You are not to presume upon his grace*, much less create some system in your mind that renders his temporal judgment impossible post-Christ because, somehow, he doesn't care anymore about his stuff. (See now why it is so important to talk about this after hearing the gospel, rather than before?)

## *Sacrilege of Taking the Name in Vain*

Finally, it seems very clear that in the laws in **Leviticus 6:1-3**, that these in fact are quite deliberate. There is remedy, however, because humans are in view, and God makes a way for justice to be served to them. The sacrilege here is taking the **Name of God in vain**.<sup>21</sup> In courts of law in the United States, we say, “**So help me God**.” This is an oath and to violate that oath is the epitome of sacrilege (even if it isn’t directly using God’s Name—Jesus). Today, few care at all about this, but it doesn’t take away from sin or the sacrilege. It is what it is, whether you believe it or not.

The reason this is so important is because by swearing by God’s Name, we are **taking both his honor and reputation upon ourselves**. God takes this so seriously that he one time **swore a covenant to Abraham**, taking his own name upon himself, and in so doing walked between the severed pieces of a sacrificed animal. The point was that if he did not take care of his end of the covenant, may this same fate await himself.

But it is more than this, for **the Name of God is God**. The Name of God is the Son of God. He bears all that the

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<sup>21</sup> John **Goldingay**, 145 has some good stuff here.



Father is in his person. He carries the name “**God With Us.**” And this **God With Us** is the same one who also died for us, thereby making this violation all the worse. Therefore, **be very careful** in light of God’s mercies, that you do not deceive your neighbor to take advantage of him, to steal from him, to gain from him at his expense.

But also know, that even if you do, which can only be done deliberately, there is **always remedy for the non-Christian and Christian alike**, the hope of the gospel, when you realize your guilt and turn to Christ for forgiveness through his recompense to God on your behalf. It is perfect and God accepts it. But then know that what this gospel expects of you is to do all within your power to make it right with your neighbor, to the great hurt of yourself, **so that** you might show the great mercies Christ has given to you back to them.

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