

c. Here we see that the priest is to wear his 'holy' garments while dealing with the altar in the temple precincts, and common clothing when he carries the ashes outside of the camp. We will spend time in the future discussing these things in greater detail. But I want to conclude by drawing your attention to another significant detail in these few verses.

d. Note that three times over the priest is commanded to ensure that the fire on the altar never goes out. What is this a picture of? What does God want his people to see and understand as they meditate on the continual flame on the altar consuming the sacrifice even while Israel sleeps?

Is this not a picture that presents a perpetually open door that beckons the needy to draw near?

Even in the middle of the darkest night there is a priest tending the altar and fire prepared.

The spiritual picture is that the way of salvation stands open – that Jesus' blood atones and that as long as a man lives the opportunity for salvation lies before him.

As long as it is called today. Do not wait for tomorrow. Do not be hindered by yesterday. Today! Today, if you hear his voice, do not turn away.

What shall I do? Reach out your hand and lay it on faith upon the head of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believe that God's fury burns against sinners, but you do not have to be consumed in that fiery judgment if you will BELIEVE. God's only begotten Son has been slaughtered to atone for sin – and all who will cry out to him for mercy will be accepted.

You need bring no sacrifice for Jesus is the only sacrifice acceptable.

But as you lay your hand upon him, you lay down your life to take up his life. This is total dedication – the statement by faith that you wish to be counted dead to yourself and alive in Christ.

a. **And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord.**

b. Think about this picture for a moment. As the worshipper stands there, he watches the most valuable animal from his herd or flock being consumed entirely on the altar. None of it is preserved for food – it is all burnt to ashes. It is FULLY DEDICATED.

I want you to recall that this sacrifice, be it bull, goat, sheep or dove is the substitute for the worshipper – the picture is that this is what fellowship with God will entail – a complete dedication – NO HALF MEASURE.

I cannot help but see that in this act the worshipper realizes that he is utterly reliant on God. He is turning away from human methods for preserving himself. If he was going to be INDEPENDENT he would have kept this best animal for himself and sold it for money, or eaten it for food. Instead he has sacrificed it with joy before God and now rests himself in faith upon God to receive him, to be his God, his King, his Lord.

c. The declaration of the Lord is that this act has pleased the Lord. Literally the words read – it is a pleasing aroma to the Lord. But lying behind these words is the idea that the attitude of this man's heart and the actions of his hands have demonstrated that he believes God and rests himself in faith upon God's promise.

V. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. (6:9, 12, 13)

a. Turn with me to Leviticus 6:8-13 - **The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put 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. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.**

b. Why do we have a second set of instructions for all of the sacrifices? The answer I find most persuasive is that the first set give instruction for the worshipper – so that he will know what is expected of him and what the priest will do; the shorter instructions are directed not to the worshipper but to the priest.

This resting hand is an acknowledgement, at the same time of need, of personal insufficiency and of faith. THE BURNT OFFERING IS NOT BROUGHT IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC SIN – BUT SIMPLY AS AN ACT OF FAITH THAT ASKS GOD TO FULFIL HIS PROMISE TO ACCEPT THE WORSHIPPER ON THE BASIS OF THIS ACT OF FAITH.

Now, with a knife in his hand, the worshipper must kill his offering. There is no way to separate himself from this picture that his substitute must perish so that he can stand.

This sacrifice is to make ATONEMENT for the worshipper. That is to TAKE AWAY God's just wrath against this man's appearing before a holy God as a sinful and unholy man.

At the heart of the burnt offering is the promise of ATONEMENT.

This gives meaning to Jesus words: **For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many. Mark 10:45**

III. ...and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar...

a. Now the priest steps forward allows the blood to pour into a bowl. As the worshipper begins to cut apart the sacrifice the priest steps to the altar with the blood and

throws the blood against the altar – the great brazen altar is stained red as the blood runs down its side.

The wages of sin are death... Romans 6:23a.

IT IS KEY AT THIS POINT THAT YOU GRASP THAT THERE CAN BE MORE THAN ONE TYPE ACTIVE AT ANY GIVEN TIME. The sacrificial animal points towards Jesus as the TRUE sacrifice who will pay sins penalty. But the priest also pictures Jesus as the true MEDIATOR who stands between God and man.

You see, the worshipper could bring a sacrifice, he could set his hand upon the sacrifice, he could take its life – BUT HE NEEDED A PRIEST TO COMPLETE THE ACT – the priest is his mediator, his go between, his representative. Only the priest can actually APPLY the blood to the altar in a plea for mercy and acceptance before God.

The worshipper is to wash away any filth on his sacrifice, in this way the priest and the altar are preserved from defilement so that he can truly present an acceptable offering.

IV. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord...

Who would offer a pigeon when he could afford a lamb – and who would bring a lamb, when he had a young bull?

But this is a gracious picture. It is the picture of a God who has compassion, not only on the rich and powerful – but upon even the poor and impoverished family who has no resources, no wealth, no herds or flocks. For a dove could be caught or bought for a few pennies.

So the word SACRIFICE is well chosen. This will not be without great cost.

So we find a man standing in his field and searching for the very best he possesses – he has understood that God is willing to accept him, and bids him bring a sacrifice, and in joy he will bring the best he can afford.

It is to be a sacrifice without blemish or spot – a CONDITION that resounds throughout the pages of the Old Testament. An acceptable sacrifice must be without blemish or spot. This is a key part of the picture and it comes to full flower in the New Testament in I Peter 1:18-19 - **...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot...**

II. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Then he shall kill the bull before the Lord...

a. Look with me at Leviticus 1:4-5 – **He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Then he shall kill the bull before the Lord...**

b. What is this picture meant to show us? Here is a man. He has discovered that God is willing to accept him if he will bring a sacrifice – and so he appears with a sacrifice, the best he can afford. NOW WE HAVE THE IMAGE OF THE MAN'S HAND PRESSING UPON THE HEAD OF THE SACRIFICE. This is a picture of faith.

The worshipper is identifying himself with this creature. He is recognizing that he stands before God on behalf of a substitute who will atone for him.

c. Faith is of no value if it does not have a promise to rest upon – and then it is only of as much value as the promise it trusts in. Therefore, the man who states that he has FAITH THAT GOD WILL RECEIVE HIM ON THE BASIS OF HIS OWN MERITS has a worthless faith – for he has no promise to rest his faith upon.

But this man is resting his hand upon the head of his sacrifice in faith that God's promise to accept a substitute in his place is CERTAIN.

The Burnt Offering

Subject: Burnt Offering

Theme: The Christian Meaning of the Burnt Offering

Passage: Leviticus 1; 6:8-13

Introduction: Lessons are learned by repetition. You learned your alphabet in this way, by continual repetition, until you didn't need to think about what 'sound' a letter makes. Most of you could read a word that you had never seen before at a glance, even if you didn't understand its meaning. Because you have learned well the lessons of primary school.

God, who has made our minds, knows well what is needed to teach us to read – both literally and figuratively. So the Old Testament is filled with pictures – some of these images may seem strange and foreign to you – but you must remember that these practices were carried out time and time again – and because they sat at the very heart of the identity of God's people, they were surely meditated upon and given careful consideration.

The burnt offering was made at incredible personal cost – it is well called 'a sacrifice'. But what does it mean? Let's take the time to gaze upon the picture this sacrifice creates – for that is the reason it is set down here – that you might gaze upon it.

I. ...he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting that he may be accepted before the Lord...

a. The gospel declares that we love Him because He first loved us. At every step along the way the human side of the gospel is a response to God's gracious promise of salvation. The book of Leviticus begins with God calling Moses and declaring that he is willing to accept men who are not pure if they will bring a sacrifice.

b. This sets a first image before us – it is the image of a man standing in his field in search of the perfect offering. If you look through this chapter, you will see that there are three potential creatures that would be a fitting sacrifice offered as a burnt offering. Either a young bullock, or a young sheep or goat, or a dove. Clearly the most costly would be a young bull and the least costly a bird.

WHO WOULD BRING A BULL when God would accept a goat? And who would bring a goat if God would be satisfied with a dove? But this is exactly the opposite question that the true believer asks. The true believer, having discovered that the Lord of all the earth is willing to accept him, and commands him to bring a sacrifice goes to his field, not asking WHAT IS THE SMALLEST AND LEAST THING I can offer to my God – but what is the greatest treasure that I can bring?