

Leviticus 7 (37-38) – Jesus is Your Perfect Offering

Heavenly Father, I ask that you would allow me personally, this local body corporately, and all who hear this message digitally, to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit through your word, so as to worship and be disciplined by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for it is in his name I pray. Amen.

The Old Testament book of Leviticus gives instructions concerning the proper worship of God for the people of Israel. It is named Leviticus because all of the priests of Israel were supposed to be from the line of Aaron, who came from the tribe of Levi. Accordingly, the book of Leviticus tells what the priests were responsible for. The book of Numbers tells us what the other Levites as custodians were to do. And the New Testament book of Hebrews explains what it all meant.

Under the Law given by Moses, everything about worship was laid out in minute detail. The Levitical priesthood was instituted (Exodus 28-29). The place of worship was centralized, first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple (Exodus 20:24 / Deuteronomy 12:5, 11). In addition to the daily sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-42), there were five specified offerings: the burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt offerings. And Israel was given a calendar of seven special feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.

The OT pattern of worship pointed to Christ, and now we don't perform those certain rituals or make those particular sacrifices, because they have been fulfilled by Jesus. Every believer is a priest (1 Peter 2:5, 9), and Jesus is the Great High Priest (Hebrews 10:21). There is no central earthly place of worship, nor is there an appointed calendar of sacred feasts. And Jesus took the Jewish Passover and transformed it into the central ordinance of the NT, the Lord's Supper, which takes you back to Calvary and points you to the finished work of Christ.

So, NT worship leaves you with no NT book of Leviticus. But the OT is the indispensable foundation for the NT. Leviticus was written some 1400 years before Christ, but it pictures Christ, his sinless life and atoning death, and it gives substance to God's plan and purpose. If there is no Leviticus, there is no Gospel. So, it is wise and helpful to know how the Gospel is found in type and shadow through the rituals and in the sacrificial system you see in the book of Leviticus. To understand how Jesus fulfills the OT types inspires worship which fuels discipleship. You will understand the book of Hebrews and its amazing depth much better, and you will more fully appreciate NT verses such as John 1:29 – *The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

The early chapters of Leviticus describe the five different offerings for worship. In chapter 1 is the burnt offering, in chapter 2 the grain offering, and in chapter 3 the peace offering. These three offerings were voluntary. Then, in chapters 4 and 5 is the sin offering, and in chapters 5 and 6 is the guilt offering. Both the sin and guilt offerings were mandatory. Chapters 6 and 7 give details about the ordination offering, meaning the role that the priests played in these offerings.

God gave very specific details on how to offer each sacrifice, because all of the offerings were types of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would perfectly fulfill them. Now the OT saints wouldn't have understood the typology as we do today. But the sacrificial system of the Law was actually a means of grace by which the relationship between God and man begins to be restored.

Ultimately, the sacrificial system was inadequate, because nobody could repay the debt of life until Christ paid the price and defeated death once and for all. And in one message we can't present all of the many details of these offerings and how all of their meticulous standards each picture the person and work of Jesus Christ. But we can give an overview of these offerings and thereby deepen your understanding of how God wants you to depend on Jesus, not only for eternal life, but also for your daily life. It is not about something you do; it is about who Jesus is, what he has done, and trusting in that, not just for salvation, but for discipleship and worship.

The burnt offering was to express commitment to God. It was also used as a general atonement for unintentional sin. An animal without blemish was offered up, either a bull, a bird, or a ram. The worshiper would identify with the animal by laying their hands on it, slaughtering it, and then it went on the bronze altar. The whole animal, except the skin, was to be totally burnt, and the smoke of the sacrifice was a sweet-smelling aroma to God. This illustrated the reconciliation made between God and the worshiper. And it all points to Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the one who reconciles you to God by offering up himself. In this offering, the animal was killed on the north side of the altar. Jesus was crucified on the north side of Jerusalem. Just as the burnt offering produced a pleasant aroma to God, so Ephesians 5:2 says that *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*. The animal was required to be without blemish, and 1 Peter 1:19 describes Jesus as a *lamb without blemish or spot* who has redeemed us by his *precious blood*. The offering was about atonement and commitment. Hebrews 9:14 says, *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*.

The grain offering would accompany the burnt offering. It was an expression of thanks to God for his provision. To the Israelites in the wilderness, grain was scarce, so this offering was costly to the worshiper. To give sacrificially was an act of worship that spoke of your dependence on God for the necessities of life. The grain was offered in the form of an unleavened cake, cereal, or cooked bread. A portion of it was burnt on the altar, and the remainder went to the priests. Like the burnt offering, the grain offering produced a pleasant aroma to God. In the burnt offering, blood was shed, pointing to the death of Jesus. In the grain offering, there was no bloodshed, which pointed to the sinless life of Jesus. His perfect life was the basis of his atoning death. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said he came to fulfill the law. Without his perfect provision you could not have the righteousness you need to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The peace offering was a celebration of gratitude and joy for the peace someone enjoyed with God. It was offered for several different circumstances. It could be given as confession of your dire need of deliverance. Sometimes it was the payment of a vow, after God had answered your prayer. It could be an expression of goodwill, given in response to God's unexpected or unsought generosity. The offering could be cattle, sheep, or a goat. It could be male or female, but must be without defect. It might also include bread.

This offering was also a sweet smell to God. The blood, fat, and kidneys of the offering were put upon the altar. The high priest was given the breast; the officiating priest was given the right shoulder. These pieces were waved over the altar during the ceremony. Some Jewish traditions say that the sacrifice was moved forward and backward, then upward and downward, making a cross.

This is a picture of your communion with God based on the work of Christ at the cross. Romans 5:1 says *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Colossians 1:20 says that Jesus was reconciling all things to himself, *making peace by the blood of his cross.* Isaiah 53:5 says *he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.*

Now Jew and Gentile, all nations, tribes, and tongues have peace with each other in Christ. Ephesians 2:14-16 – *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

The remainder of the animal was used as a meal between two or more parties before God who shared that meal together in fellowship and commitment to each other. This was a beautiful picture of how God and man share a meal together. God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, and now we spiritually feed upon Christ in fellowship with the Father as we take the Lord's Supper.

The sin offering was given to purify someone entering the presence of God, as its focus was on cleansing from defilement. Depending on the person and their situation, either a young bull, a male goat, female goat, dove, pigeon, or fine flour was offered. This offering was not a sweet smell to God. Only the fat, kidneys, and liver were burned on the altar. The rest of the animal was taken outside of the camp and burned there. The blood of the animal was used to cleanse the furniture in the tabernacle, the priest would sprinkle the veil which separated the holy place from the most holy place 7 times, and he would also put blood on the horns of the altar of incense. This signifies the fact that sin doesn't just affect you, it stains God's house.

Today, God doesn't dwell in the tabernacle or temple. Now he dwells in the hearts of believers. Sin stained the temple of your heart, but Hebrews 10:21-22 says that Jesus, the great high priest of God's house, has sprinkled our hearts clean. 1 Peter 1:2 says that Jesus has sprinkled us with his blood. Jesus is described as our sin offering in Hebrews 13:10-12, *"We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood."* Jesus Christ is our great high priest, and he was also our priestly sacrifice, who sprinkled the temple of our hearts with his blood, cleansing them for all time.

The guilt offering focused on the need for payment to set things right when someone had done wrong. It's also called the trespass or reparations offering. It was mandatory because everyone has sinned against God. But it also dealt with specific sins against others. Forgiveness was dependent upon the worshiper making amends, and the sacrifice was viewed as a restitution, with a 20% fee added to it. The sacrifice was a ram, but the debt could also be paid in silver. The fat, kidneys, and liver were offered to God, and the remainder was eaten inside the court of the tabernacle.

This offering presents Christ, dying for your trespasses, making right what he had not done wrong. Colossians 2:13-14 says that you...*were dead in your trespasses, but God...has forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against you and its demands...by nailing it*

to the cross. The debt you owe to God and those you have sinned against is more than you can pay, so God sent his Son to be your perfect guilt offering. The prophet Isaiah said of Jesus, “*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days...*” (Isaiah 53:10) The word used for “offering for guilt” is the exact same word used in Leviticus 5:15 to describe the guilt offering.

And Christ did more than make amends, he added extra, bringing more glory to God and more blessings to you than before your sin was committed. Ephesians 1:3-14 says that in Christ you are blessed with every spiritual blessing, that you are holy and blameless before God, that you are adopted by God, that he has given you wisdom and insight and an eternal inheritance, and the down payment of eternity in the person of the Holy Spirit, and this gives God glory. It says you have all this because you have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of your trespasses.

Now in light of all that you’ve heard, hear these verses from Hebrews and worship with me.

Hebrews 7:27 – *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.*

Hebrews 9:12 – *he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 9:26 – *he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Hebrews 10:4-5 – *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me”* which is quoting Psalm 40:6.

Hebrews 10:12, 14 – *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

You don’t come to God with any sacrificial offering for sin today, because Jesus has fulfilled the Old Covenant system of worship through his once-for-all sacrifice.

The ordination offering is about the consecration of the priests. It is mentioned in Leviticus 7:37 in anticipation of the next chapter and to designate the unique occasions when the various offerings were used to set apart the priests as ministers. You see this depicted in Exodus 29, and again, starting in Leviticus 6:8, and on through chapter 8, with Moses and Aaron performing the ceremony in chapter 9. There is so much to discover and discuss there, but that’s for another time.

Today, all believers in Christ are priests before God. Revelation 1:4-5 says *Jesus...loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom of priests to...God.* 1 Peter 2:5 says *you are like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* 1 Peter 2:9 says...*you are a*

chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The sacrifice of Jesus cleanses you, satisfies your debt, and gives you peace with God, allowing you to enter into his presence. He has perfectly provided for your sins so that you don't have to offer him a sacrifice for sin, but you can offer him *the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name* (Hebrews 13:15).

Now I want to further apply this to your daily life.

When you face or fear rejection, when you feel illegitimate, inadequate, insecure, you don't need to imagine yourself rewriting your past. You don't need to dream about proving yourself in the future. You don't need to wear yourself out trying to please God or other people. You don't need to worry yourself to death that you won't be accepted, and that your meager efforts won't add up to very much. You don't need to avoid your feelings by procrastination or busyness. You don't need to make yourself feel better by indulging in overeating, undereating, drinking or drugs, pornography, sexual sin, or whatever cherished habit you might turn to when you feel bored, without purpose, like a failure, lonely, tired, fearful, helpless, hopeless, or threatened.

All of these things happen because you feel the inner need to justify yourself, and when you don't feel as if you can, you lose your peace. And that rebellion, those problems, those sins, that self-sabotage, seems like the answer. Well your feelings are real, and your heart is right, it needs help. But you don't need to justify yourself. You need to look to Christ as the fulfillment of these sacrifices for you. I'm not just talking about getting saved. I'm also talking to people who are already saved. But you need to be set free, and worship is the key.

When trouble comes into your mind, meditate on him. Use your faith to worship him, accepting him as the perfect offering for your imperfections.

- Jesus is your burnt offering, so you're pleasing to God, and your past can't alter your future.
- Jesus is your grain offering, and his provision means you don't have to prove yourself to be accepted.
- Jesus is your peace offering, and you don't need to avoid life, and you can be alone with your thoughts. You can live with a grateful joy.
- Jesus is your sin offering, and you don't have to sabotage yourself with indulgence because you feel stained by unworthiness. He has washed you clean.
- Jesus is your guilt offering, and even when you feel overwhelmed by all the mess you've made, he has redeemed your soul and is redeeming your life.
- Jesus has ordained you to be a priest in his kingdom. He has blessed you with all you need for life and godliness. He has made you an agent of reconciliation, someone who has been forgiven and has learned how to forgive.

Come to God on the basis of Jesus Christ. In John 6:37, Jesus says *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*

Because Jesus is your perfect offering, your best days are ahead of you. Amen.