

# Observations on The Burnt Offering

The Inspired writer to the Hebrews spoke of the offerings required under the Law, and called this aspect a “shadow of good things to come”. The “good things” of course, are those benefits to be obtained by faith in the sacrifice of our Master, and include the gift of life obtainable through Him. One of the means by which the Law foreshadowed Christ was its adoption of the Burnt Offering. These were offered on a variety of occasions, such as the daily “continual burnt offering” (Ex. 29:38-42, Lev. 6:9-13), the additional offering on the Sabbath (Num. 28:9-10), at the Passover (Num. 28:19-23), and other special feast days. But our reading in Leviticus indicates that it could also be offered as a voluntary free-will offering:

“If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it *of his own voluntary will* at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before Yahweh” (Lev. 1:3).

It is this aspect that we will focus on for our exhortation today.

Interestingly, the first two references where the Burnt Offering is named such are in the book of Genesis – before Law was ordained (hence we said above that the Law adopted it). Like Circumcision, it became incorporated into the body of legislation that governed the worship of the Nation before their God.

The first reference to the naming of a burnt offering is in the context of Noah, offering up some of the clean animals that had survived the flood with him. Speaking of what he did upon departing from the Ark, the Spirit writes:

“And Noah built an altar unto Yahweh; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and *offered burnt offerings* upon the altar” (Gen. 8:20).

Then we read of how this was received by the Almighty:

“And Yahweh *smelled a sweet savour*; and Yahweh said again in His Heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither again will I smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (Gen. 8:21).

We find then, that the sacrificing of burnt offerings gave pleasure to Yahweh, and it was upon receiving the odour of burning as a “sweet savour”, that He promised man that the earth would not again be cursed, as with the flood. The context here is most instructive: after Noah and his family emerged from the Ark, the only people who populated the earth (albeit only 8 of them (1 Pet. 3:20)), were faithful. Typifying the kingdom to come, the only humans remaining were men and women of faith. Making the burnt offering in this way was an act of worship recognising Yahweh’s Grace in securing their salvation, and as we shall see, with the entire animal being offered and consumed by fire, it was also a means of declaring that everything belonged to Yahweh, and ought to be offered up in service to Him.

The next occasion where a burnt offering is recorded as having been made, is the case of Abraham and Isaac. Again, we see the principles of devotion, and offering up sacrifice in the service of Yahweh. Abraham was instructed:

“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and *offer him up there for a burnt offering* upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22:2).

So it was, that Abraham complied with the command, and took his son Isaac up into the mount, and if his hand were not stayed by the Angel, he would certainly have offered him up. Isaac was as good as dead as

he was laid upon the altar - hence it is written of Abraham's faith: "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:19).

Receiving Isaac as being figuratively raised from the dead, Abraham turned, and saw that Yahweh himself has provided a Ram to be offered in his stead. Again, it is in these things that we find Christ - an example of the Father and Son working together to provide a sacrificial remedy to the malaise into which man has fallen. In this, we have the greatest Burnt Offering of all time foreshadowed - the offering up of Christ by the Eternal Spirit - a whole and complete devotion to the doing of the Father's Will (Phil. 2:8).

This brings us to consider another aspect of the Burnt Offering as it foreshadowed Messiah. Luke chapter 2 describes Mary, after having given birth to Jesus:

"when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord ... and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" (Lu. 2:22-24)

It is interesting to note that because of her giving birth to Christ, Mary had to go through a period of "purification"! And when we look back at the Law concerning the offering up of two birds, we find that one was for a burnt offering, and the other a sin offering (Lev. 12:8). We would do well to ask why a sin offering was made for bearing the Holy One of Yahweh? The answer can be found once we recognise that Jesus - he, himself, likewise (Heb. 2:14) took part of the same death-stricken sinful nature common to all men. The offering of a sin offering points forward to Messiah offering himself to bear away the sin of the world, and this is complemented by the offering up of a burnt offering, which speaks of the climax of a whole life laid down in service to God.

### ***THE CONSUMPTION OF SIN-NATURE***

We have already stated that the Burnt Offering, with the whole animal being totally consumed upon the altar, speaks of a total dedication upon the basis of the sacrifice of Christ. But there are other principles being taught: notice that:

- 1) This offering was *voluntary*, (Lev. 1:3)
- 2) It was not offered for any particular sin or offence.

In these two particulars we can see Christ who through making his Father's Will his own willingly laid down his life for his friends, not for any sin he had committed, but to bear away the sins of his brethren. But there are other aspects in which the Burnt Offering spoke of Messiah - bro Robert Roberts wrote:

"That burnt offering should be required in the absence of particular offence shows that our unclean state as the death-doomed children of Adam itself unfits us for approach to the Deity apart from the recognition and acknowledgment of which the burnt offering was the form required and supplied. It was "because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel," as well as "because of their transgressions in all their sins," *that atonement was required* for even the Tabernacle of the congregation (Lev. 16:16).

The type involved in complete burning is self manifest: it is consumption of sin-nature. This is the great promise and prophecy and requirement of every form of the Truth: the destruction of the body of sin (Rom. 6:6). It was destroyed in Christ's crucifixion - the "one great offering"; we ceremonially share it in our baptism: "crucified with Christ," "baptised unto his death". We morally participate in it in putting the old man to death in "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" and the hope before us is the prospect of becoming subject to such a physical change as will consume mortal nature and change it into the glorious nature of the Spirit ... When the work is finished, flesh and blood with all its weakness and its woe, will have ceased from the earth, and given place to a glad and holy race of men immortal and "equal to the angels".

It was a beautiful requirement of the wisdom of God in the beginning of things that He should require an act of worship that typified the repudiation of sinful nature as the basis of divine fellowship and acceptability.

Those who deny Christ's participation thereof, deny its removal by sacrifice, and therefore deny the fundamental testimony of the gospel, that he is the "Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world."

*Robert Roberts: "The Law of Moses"*

The purpose of the Altar therefore, was to facilitate the destruction of the flesh. The animal literally placed there was totally consumed, and reduced to ashes. This foreshadowed Yahweh's righteousness in condemning human nature to the grave because of "sin in the flesh", the resident principle of its operation.

### ***A COVERING***

Although the entire carcass of the animal was consumed upon the altar, its skin was removed first, and given to the priests:

"the priest that offereth any man's burnt offering, even the priest shall have to himself the skin of the burnt offering which he hath offered" (Lev. 7:8)

The use of the skin as part of a sacrifice brings us back to Genesis once more, but this time Genesis chapter 3:

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did Yahweh Elohim make coats of skins and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21).

Previously the first sinful pair had attempted to cover their nakedness themselves, using fig leaves. But it was required of them to instead cast them aside, and put on the garments of Yahweh's providing. Even so, we have another foreshadow of Messiah – through Yahweh providing His only Son as a burnt offering, we can receive a covering for our sins through him. Hence the Apostolic exhortation:

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have ***put off*** the Old Man with his deeds: and have ***put on*** the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that Created him" (Col. 3:10).

What we find when considering the Burnt offering, the slain animal typifies both Christ in willingly offering himself, and the covering for sin that he provides, but also in how it points forward to his ecclesia: the called-out ones who lay down their lives in service. So the "bride" is spoken of:

"a glorious ecclesia, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27)

Notice also the context of verse 26: "that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word". The references back to the sacrifices are very plain: just as the sacrifice was washed inwardly, even so the God who desires Truth in the inward parts (Psa. 51:6) has ordained that we might daily be "washed" by the influence of the Word, and its cleansing effect upon our minds.

The real essence of the Burnt Offering comes out, in Mark chapter 12. In this place, we read of a very perceptive Scribe, who answered the Master:

"Well, Master, thou hast said the Truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the

soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:32-33).

Notice the comparison being made: the wholehearted giving of self to the service of God is worth more than the burnt offerings which taught that principle. So we learn that though the Israelite went through the physical motions of offering the animal, unless the principles being taught were reflected in a life of obedience it would profit him nothing. A full and wholehearted service is what Yahweh requires – and he has obtained it in His Son.

### *A SWEET SMELLING SAVOUR*

What signalled acceptance of the Burnt Offering by Yahweh, was the rising up of a sweet smelling savour:

“ ... The priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, and offering made by fire, *of a sweet savour unto Yahweh*” (Lev. 1:12, 17, 3:5 &c.)

So it is in the Antitype: just as the sacrifice only ended with the smoke that rose up before Yahweh, even so the offering of Christ was accomplished with his being caused to ascend up. Again, speaking of this, Robert Roberts wrote:

“The whole process of the Lord’s death and burial was so guarded (while giving to mankind every security as to the fact of his death, and every evidence of a complete conformity to the law of sacrifice, as a shedding of blood for the remission of sins), as to fence off all needless humiliation or outrage. A short three days in a new and honourable tomb, and then the body that had been impaled revived in healing life, without having experienced dismemberment or disintegration, or the humiliation of decomposition. Changed by the Spirit, it ascended to the Father, “a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord” (Law of Moses, page 217).

In these things there are many principles for instruction in righteousness, but as we come to consider Messiah as the focal point of our meeting together, we see all the righteous principles of the law coming together in he who was “the word made flesh.” He is the Son in whom his Father is well pleased: the doer of His Will, who was wholly devoted in service.

So Jesus the Messiah is portrayed as saying:

“Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin [cp. The two birds referred to earlier], thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me” to do thy Will, O God ... by the which Will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:5-7, 10, 14 – see whole chapter)

Messiah laid down his life for his friends, having made his Father’s Will his own (Mat. 26:39). He was a willing sacrifice, and having laid down his life, he took it again, and ascended to his Father as a sweet-smelling savour. He was changed by the Spirit though the bestowal of immortality, that though faith in his shed blood, and his resurrection to life, we can have hope.

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