



## REVIEW ARTICLE

### A RECONSIDERATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICATION OF THE BURNT OFFERING

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#### ABSTRACT

The first burnt offering in Leviticus is the most typical worship in the Old Testament. This burnt offering, which had to be given daily from the time of the Exodus, contains some important regulations and theological significance. That there is no discrimination between the rich and the poor, and that the priest and layman are working together. This provides an important means of Christian worship in today's Christians and modern churches.

## INTRODUCTION

Leviticus is the book which tells Israel in Old Testament is a worshipping community and illustrates well the religious character of Israel in the Old Testament. Leviticus is the book named after the Levi, a son of Jacob, Levi became one of the twelve tribes of Israel in history. It tells how Israel should live as a worshipping community and records the rules of everyday life. It records also the various sacrifices and ordinances of everyday life that God's people need to maintain a right relationship with God. It contains religious ordinances and regulations for feasts and sacrifices of the Old Testament including burnt offering, meal offering, peace offerings, sin offering, compensation offering, and feasts and festivals such as Passover, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Booths, Sabbath and Jubilee. It is the burnt offering that appears first in Leviticus's five greatest sacrifices. This paper examines the provisions, uses and theological features of burnt offerings in the Old Testament and examines how they can be applied to modern churches and society.

#### Regulations for burnt offerings

According to Leviticus 1, God calls Moses at the Tent of Meeting, and passes through Moses the laws for worship to the people of Israel.

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At this time the Tent of Meeting is the place of revelation. And the Israelites meet together in the Tent of Meeting to worship God. At this time the Tent of Meeting is a place to worship God (Kim, *Holiness*, 63). God speaks of the burnt offering first in this Tent of Meeting (Kim, 2011). Yahweh called to Moses, and spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying, (Kessler and Bound, 2004). Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When anyone of you offers an offering to Yahweh, you shall offer your offering of the cattle, from the herd and from the flock (Klein, 1980). If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall offer it at the door of the Tent of Meeting, that he may be accepted before Yahweh (Knight, 1981). He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him (Lev 1:1-4). The burnt offering is the most representative of the various sacrifices of the Old Testament. It is a sacrifice to the LORD God by burning all offerings without giving to priests. The Hebrew word *olah*, which is a burnt offering, is derived from the verb *alah*, which means 'ascend', and expresses the appearance of fire, smoke, and fragrance rising up to God. In the Old Testament times, there were occasions when a number of sacrifices were offered together, usually with the burnt offering first. The characteristic of this burnt offering is that all of the sacrifices offered are burned in all but the dirty parts to be thrown out. This type of sacrifices were already prevalent in the ancient Near East. There are two kinds of burnt offerings, one for the morning and for the evening offerings of the priests. At the time of the Exodus, the Israelites had to sacrifice a sheep for burnt

offerings every morning and evening at the tent of meeting in the wilderness (Ex 29:38-41). Another is the general burnt offering offered by an individual, which allows the individual to offer burnt offerings when he atones his faults and desires God's grace (Lev 1:2). The man who offered the sacrifice laid his hands on the beast's head. By doing so, he expresses his willingness to give some or all of himself to God with the beast (Lev 1:4). The offerings were identified with those who offer sacrifices through ordination. In other words, if the sacrifice is to die, the person is to die, and the sacrifice to God is to give himself (Knight, *Leviticus*, 14). The priest took the blood and sprinkled it around the altar. The shedding of blood has a symbolic meaning of returning the life of the sacrificed animal to God. When the fire burns, it is understood that the fragrant smell has been received by God (Lev 1:9). As such, The anthropomorphism, which God is depicted as a person with a nose like a man, is often found in sacrificial ordinances. The crime of man causes the wrath of God, and the wrath of God brings judgment. The people of Israel, however, turn down the wrath of God by offering burnt offerings. And is exempt from the judgment to be the result of wrath. For God delights in the smoke of the burnt offering and sinks his wrath (Kim, *Holiness*, 77). The priests had to keep the burnt altar out of the fire: 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 (Lev 6:9). The fact that the fire on the altar should not be turned off implies that God is always there, because God expects the people of Israel to always be ready to serve God. For this purpose, the oil from the sacrifice of peace offerings was used in the altar of burnt offering. The New Testament does not require the daily offering of burnt offerings anymore, because the New Testament understands that Jesus died on the cross as a full rite of sacrifice for the sins of mankind once and for all.

### **The heart of the worshiper vs. the size of the offerings**

As burnt offerings, males without flaws of cattle or sheep / goats were used. To sacrifice flawless offerings is because God wants the integrity of the worshipers. The reason for offering males as sacrifices is to offer the best. This is because in ancient society it gave the male superior value to the female. It may also be due to the practical reason that females must feed and breed (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 147). However, it was not easy to give a ram or a goat as a livestock. Therefore, those who offer cattle, sheep and goats as males are comparatively economically affordable. Birds were allowed only as sacrifices offered by the poor. If a man wants to bring a bird as a burnt offering, then he shall offer his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. The ancient Israelites raised such birds at home: There was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver (2Kings 6:25). In the case of birds, the feature is that the distinction between male and female is impossible and the size of the offering is so small. Unlike the case of cattle, sheep, and goats, the sacrifice of birds is done by priests without the participation of the Israelites. This is probably because the offering was small, so it was for the convenience of the priest alone (Kim, *Holiness*, 75). After the birth of Jesus in the New Testament, Joseph and Mary climbed up to Jerusalem to give the firstborn to God (see Ex 13:1-2, 14-15)

after Mary performed the sanctuary of the pregnant mother (see Lev 12:1-8). The sacrifice of the doves at this time tells us that the family was poor: When the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy 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 (Luke 2:22-24). What is interesting is that when a bird is burnt as a burnt offering, it is burned on the altar in a state of "tearing the body out of its wing but not being torn". Why is it called to tear that little sacrifice? The reason is to make the bird look bigger because it is too small for the cattle or sheep / goats that other people are offering. Though he now devotes a small portion, he is willing to give God a little bigger and better. Such a worshiper's mind appears in the act of tearing the bird's body. The dove that is offered from the heart to give to God the best is never a small sacrifice compared to other people's cattle or sheep / goats. Jesus praised the widow for dropping in two little copper coins, worth about a penny, because he had read the heart of the woman who was best to give it to God (Mk 12:41-44). The Pharisee who makes a lot of offerings are people that God does not see. Jesus directs the disciples' eyes to the widow from the rich. The widow is poor and of no value to the eyes of men, but within her was the love of God alive. She left her last thing to God and expected her life to be guaranteed from God. Jesus is offering this woman as an example to his disciples and the modern churches.

### **Those who gave the burnt offerings**

The word burnt offering in the Old Testament first appeared immediately after the flood of Noah's time. The first thing Noah did when he came out of the Ark was to take sacrifices among all the clean beasts and birds. He did sacrifices to God with them (Gen 8:20). Noah's burnt offering has two meanings. One is a gratitude for the grace of God saving from the flood judgment, and the other is asking God for grace for the future of his new life. After the burnt offering, God gave new grace to the world of creation. It is that God does not curse the earth because of men again (Gen 8:21). In response to the burnt offering of a man Noah, God promised to be faithful to the world forever. Generally, sacrifices in the ancient Near East were done for two purposes. It is first, to appease God by offering sacrifices, and second, to provide food to God (Selman, "Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East", 89-100). The burnt offering in the Old Testament also has the meaning of relieving God's wrath. Noah's burnt offering was the same, and the offering that David had the same meaning. David relieved the wrath of God, which was caused by the census by offering burnt offerings: David built there an altar to Yahweh, and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings. So Yahweh was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel (2Sam 24:25). In Genesis 22, Abraham's attempt to offer Isaac as a burnt offering is the most dramatic worship scene in the Old Testament. Here Abraham took just the trees, the fire, and the sword to be used in the burnt offering (Gen 22:6). Isaac said to Abraham, "Where is the Lamb for burnt offerings?" (Gen 22:7). At the end of the story, Abraham took the ram and offered burnt offerings on behalf of his son (Gen 22:13). These illustrate the typical burnt offering. God said to Abraham, "Take Isaac, your beloved son, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him a burnt offering from there on a mountain I have

told you." This is a long time after Isaac has been able to climb up the mountain with the trees for the burnt offering. Therefore, Isaac appearing in this case seems to be unreasonable as a young man of about 20 years old. If so, father Abraham is about 120 years old. Abraham, an old man, took the trees for the burnt offering and gave it to his son Isaac, and he took the fire and the sword and went to the place God had told him. And there he bound his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22:9-10). In this process, if the father and the son competed with each other, Abraham, who had already become an old man, would have lost his young son Isaac. Abraham's burnt offering could have been possible because Isaac had volunteered for Abraham and was bound. So, in the earliest Targum, The Fragmentary Targum, there is an interpretation that Isaac volunteered to be a sacrifice. The story is as follows: Abraham stretched out his hand and picked up a sword to kill his son Isaac. Isaac answered and said to his father Abraham, "Tie my hands firmly so that I will not resist when I am in pain, and I will not interfere with you, nor will you defile your sacrifices, so that you will not fall into the depths of destruction in the coming world." Abraham turned his eyes to Isaac's eyes, but Isaac's eyes turned to an angel of heaven.

Isaac saw the angels, but Abraham did not see them. Then the angels of heaven came out and said to one another, "Let us go and see the two faithful men of the world. One is a slaughterer and the other is slaughtered. The one who kills does not hesitate, and the one who is slain puts forth his neck"(Klein, The Fragment Targums of the Pentateuch, 123; Lee, "Biblical Exegesis", 15). In the New Testament, the term burnt offering only appears twice. However, the meaning of burnt offering frequently appears in relation to ministry with Jesus Christ. We were given the redemption by the precious blood of Christ, the spotless and spotless lamb (1Pet 1:18-19). Christ gave himself to God as a fragrant offering and sacrifice for us (Eph 5:2) and, on behalf of the burnt offering, gave eternal sacrifice and sits at the right hand of God (Heb 10:11-12). The authors of the New Testament interpret the burnt offering of the Old Testament christologically. Jesus Christ is a better burnt offering than the burnt offering of the Old Testament. We do not need to repeat it like the burnt offerings of the Old Testament because Jesus Christ once offered his body at once, so that the Son of God might sacrifice himself, the more honorable sacrifice of animals (Kim, 80).

### Conclusion

The burnt offering is the most frequent priest in the Old Testament.

The burnt offering, the most representative sacrament of the Old Testament, conveys some important ideas to the modern church. The burnt offering is the most popular worship in the Old Testament. The burnt offering, the most representative sacrament of the Old Testament, conveys some important ideas to the modern churches. First, the worshiper is more important than the kind of offering. The rich devote cattle, the middle class devote a sheep or goat, while the poor devote birds. The value of birds is never lighter than cattle, sheep, or goats. The important thing is the heart of the dedicating person. It is important to give voluntarily and with gratitude even if you offer a bird, rather than sacrificing it even if it is expensive and big. Second, the burnt offering means to be fully devoted to God. Burning does not mean to dedicate a part, but to dedicate everything entirely. The fact that Abraham sacrificed Isaac means that his future was entirely devoted to God. Third, all worship should cooperate with the preserver and the congregation. The priest alone was not able to do worship. The man who brought the burnt offering laid his hands on the head of the burnt offering, took the sacrifice and took off the skin. Then the priest put the sacrifice on the altar and burned it to God. It is significant that the person who brought the offering and the priest shared the work. There is a misconception that Leviticus is often a sacramental provision for Levites who were principals of the priests, but Leviticus is not a written word for a particular group of priests. It details the specific religious life of the entire people of Israel. Therefore, in the sacramental regulations, the sacrifice provisions for the people (Lev 1:1-6:7) precede the sacrifice provisions for the priests (Lev 6:8-7:38). And it takes up more. Worship given to God must not be burdened to any one person, but a "worship together". Today's worship needs to be more actively accepted by lay people rather than by pastors.

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