

THE OFFERINGS (3)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Genesis 8:15-9:3

So far we saw from Genesis 3 and 5 that man had become a sinner. He had failed to obey God and had become a slave of Satan by obeying him. Consequently, man was afraid of God: he knew that he was naked and could not stand before Him. Then in chapter 5 we saw that this is the condition of every descendant of Adam. But God received satisfaction through the death of a substitute. The wages of sin is death. God Himself slaughtered animals to clothe Adam and Eve with their skins. So both were clothed with clothing that could only be obtained through the death of another. Only thus could they exist before God.

We further saw that Abel accepted the need of the death of a substitute through faith. Through faith he brought the best of his flock and received testimony from God that he was righteous. Cain, on the other hand, brought the products of his own work and was not accepted by God.

The principle has thus been clearly established that through the death of another (who did not sin and who has been chosen by God), one can exist before God. But how is it then that Abel still had to die? Wasn't the substitute sufficient? In Genesis 8 we find the answer to that question. After God had spoken to Adam that death would be the wages of sin, we understand that it only concerned the death of his body. Yet, now we know that it reaches much further, now we know God's thoughts shown us in chapter 8. God wants us to know that when man has spoiled something, He intervenes, but He never restores that what is spoiled. He does not restore man into his former condition, but into an entirely new condition, one that is much more glorious.

In Genesis 7 and 8 we find the Flood. Although the flood does not directly involve sacrifice, it may be good to say something about it. In the Flood we find the *character* of God's judgment displayed to the full, the Flood shows what everyone's future will be; it shows God's judgment over all men and all animals. It was the full consequence for the world of Adam's deed in Eden. However, the judgment did not fall upon Noah, although he was not kept from the judgment as we will be. *We* will be kept from the hour of temptation which will come over the entire earth. *Noah* had to go through it, but... in the ark, an obvious picture of the Lord Jesus.

Whoever does not want to be condemned must appear before God, not merely in death, but also as being united with the sacrifice that has been brought. In this manner he will pass through the judgment of God; but being *in* the offering, the judgment does not touch him.

What we read in Genesis 8 is the other aspect resulting from the offering, namely the salvation which leads us into a new world. Here we find the new earth. It is only a picture of the coming new earth and the new heavens. As far as we are concerned, we will have our part in the new heavens. Noah, who had to go through the judgment but who did not die because he was in the ark, is on the new earth and builds there an altar and offers up burnt-sacrifices. And then we read that God said, "Jehovah smelled the sweet odour. And Jehovah said in His heart, 'I will no more henceforth curse the ground on account of man, for the thought of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will no more smite every living thing, as I have done. Henceforth, all the days of the earth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease' "(Gen. 8:21-22).

In Genesis 6 we find nearly the same words, but then the condition of man was such that God had to judge them. But in chapter 8, although God repeats that the thoughts of man's heart is evil, God does not add to it, "I must execute judgment," but rather, "the character of man will not hinder Me in bestowing the blessing I desire to give." Now a new condition can follow. For us that is the eternal condition of which we have an example here. And what is the basis of this eternal condition of blessings? It is the fact that God has smelled the sweet odour of the burnt-offerings (Gen. 8:21).

We know that all sacrifices are types of the Lord Jesus, and insofar as the bloody sacrifices are concerned, they are a type of the Lord Jesus on the cross. In Genesis 4 we are not told what the character of the offering was. Until then, it had only been revealed that a sacrifice had died to clothe the sinner. But now, we are dealing with blessings, and therefore the type of sacrifice is mentioned (Gen. 8:20). It is the burnt-offering; later we will see the significance of this fact.

But here, we may observe something more than before: the sacrifice does not only save from judgment, but leads into a new world, into a world where only blessing is and where this blessing never ends. Noah's new world speaks in type of a world where paradise cannot change, although God knows who we are that dwell there (Gen. 8:21-22). That is the remarkable point here.

We have a second point in verse 20. First of all, Noah builds an altar. In chapter 4 there was no mention of an altar. It is often thought that this detail is of no importance. However, the Lord Jesus said something that shows us the reverse. When we think of the value of the work of the Lord Jesus, we would be inclined to say that the sacrifice was of more importance than the altar. But the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 23:18-19 that this is not true: the altar is more important than the sacrifice, for the sacrifice is sanctified (is given its value) by the altar. This shows us that it was not only important that someone die for us, but that everything depended on *who* that person was.

When we read of the tabernacle in Exodus, we see that the brazen or copper altar was also a type of the Lord Jesus. It was of wood. Wood grows on the surface of the earth and speaks of the Lord Jesus as Man. But the altar was covered with copper. The copper speaks of righteousness so great that it can withstand the test of fire without being destroyed. Numbers 16:36-40 covers this aspect.

And so we find here for the first time an altar. God wants to show what is important, that is, the Person of the Sacrifice, of the Substitute. God also mentions the character of the offering. We read in verse 20, "Noah built an altar to Jehovah; and took of every clean animal, and of all clean fowl, and offered up burnt-offerings on the altar." The first point is that the offering had to be clean. To say it more accurately: God wants to show here, what the Lord Jesus would be, that He would be clean, that is to say that the "Seed of the woman" would not be a sinner. But God does not only want to say that He would be clean, but also that because the sacrifice was taken of *all* clean animals, in this offering *all* cleanness, *all* that is good on earth, would be seen. Fowl were included; they speak to us of heaven, but there was also cattle. It was therefore an offering with a heavenly character that stemmed from the earth, containing *all* the good that could be found on earth. What a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus! All that was good on earth was united in Him. He was the perfect Man, such as man should have been. That is the character of the One Who died on the cross as the true burnt-offering.

Later, when we will be dealing with the burnt-offering in Leviticus 1, we will see that if an Israelite wanted to bring a sacrifice to God, he had to divide it in its parts, so that the various beauties of the sacrifice could be seen. Even here in Genesis 8, this happened: Noah took from all clean fowl and from every clean animal. If I may say so, all parts of the burnt-offering were brought. What an expression of what THE burnt-offering would be! I do not doubt that even then, faith took its lesson from it. In any event, we understand how greatly we are blessed that we have such a Substitute.

Then in Genesis 9, we see that God gives animals to be food for man. Before that time this was not the case. At the close of chapter 1 we read that God had given man all the seed sowing herbs: "Behold, I have given you every herb producing seed that is on the whole earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree producing seed: it shall be food for you" (v. 29). Thus God had given every plant and every fruit that carried seed as food for man. This speaks of life and fruit; it is the food for a *clean* man. But we know what has become of man. He has sinned and thus faces death, so God gives him other food, a food speaking of death. *A man who deserves death has to learn that he can only live by feeding on that which has died!* The Lord Jesus shows us this in John 6, "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal" (see vv. 53-57). That explains what we find here. God has given us meat as food to remind us of this lesson every time we eat meat. When we eat meat we ought to remember that it speaks of the fact that we can only live because Christ has died. From this we see how wrong are doctrines that prohibit the eating of meat. It is Satan who wants to hinder us from eating what God has given.

Genesis 22:1-13

We have read in Genesis 3:15 that the serpent would crush the heel of the Seed of the woman. When God afterwards clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins, we can easily understand that these two things have to do with each other: the offering of which all the other offerings were to be types would be the "Seed of the woman." In Genesis 22 God wants to make this matter clear to us. The sacrifice would be a man, the only son of a father, the *father* himself would offer him up.

So far Abel had brought an offering and so did Noah. This is what the Gospel shows us, that a man can only approach God with the Lord Jesus. But here in Genesis 22 we have the actual *foundation* of the Gospel, that *God* has given the Sacrifice so that man could be saved through the Sacrifice. He, the Father, gave His Son Whom He loves. We find this in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him may not perish, but have life eternal."

When we read the story of Abraham and Isaac, we sense how great the test must have been to Abraham to bring his own son as the sacrifice. But what a glorious instruction he received so that he could understand the love of God. In Psalm 94:9 it says, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" The God Who put such love in the heart of a father, would He not love His Son? He is the eternal Father and His Son is His only-begotten.

In Genesis 22 we read what God did: we see the basis of the Gospel. In many gospel messages it is said, "The Lord Jesus wants to save you so that God's judgment will not touch you, for the Lord Jesus has endured that judgment." This is very true. But if the message does not go further, the Gospel is robbed of its power. *God, the Judge, gave His Son: the Father* gave His only, beloved Son. That is how much *He* loved the sinners, and only in this way could they be saved. The sacrifice of Isaac is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus. Isaac was no longer a child; generally it is believed that he was about twenty years old. How beautiful is it to see him go with his father. Only once did he question his father. Twice it says that "they went both of them together"! Don't we read the same of the Lord Jesus? *We* know this through the New Testament, but Abraham's faith could see it here.

What a picture of love we see in Abraham! God did not wait until Abraham was on the mountain to say, "Offer Isaac up for a burnt-offering." Men can do great things at the spur of the moment. Abraham, however, knew what he had to do, for three days, and yet he continued his way. Yes, Abraham knew it for *more* than three days. And then we think of 1 Peter 1:20 where the Lord Jesus is presented as the Lamb of God "foreknown before the foundation of the world."

We also see how God gave explicit instructions for the bringing of the sacrifice. "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and there offer him up for a *burnt-offering* on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Isaac means "to laugh." He was the source of gladness and satisfaction to his father; in him, his father found his delight, for he was the subject of his father's joy. And in this very manner, the Lord Jesus would come to be sacrificed and the Father Himself would offer Him up.

I repeat, the Lord Jesus was in complete agreement with the Father. In verse 13 we read that a ram was caught by its horns in the thicket. In this we find the true character of the burnt-offering. Horns speak of strength, and it was the horns that held the ram, his strength restrained him. The thicket is a picture of man, of the world in its sinful condition. There the might, the power of the Lord's love restrained Him. The Song of Songs defines what love is: "strong as death, and the waters of judgment cannot quench it" (8:6-7). The power of the Lord Jesus' love brought Him to the cross, into death. God loved us and the Lord Jesus loved us. Both Father and Son shared the deep-seated feelings of love to save us, lost creatures.

But above all, Abraham is the dominant figure in Genesis 22 as the father of a son. He typifies God the Father. *He* does everything. In verse 3 *he* rises early, *he* saddles the ass, *he* cuts the wood, rises up and goes to the place that God had told him of. He does not tell his servants that *they* have to saddle the ass or to cut the wood.

Wood stands for something that grows on earth, a type of human nature, just as well of the Lord Jesus as of every man. In the tabernacle, two *altars* were types of the Lord Jesus, but the boards, joined to one another, were a type of us believers, made of the same wood. Now we see that Abraham "cleaves the wood for the burnt-offering." For four thousand years God cut the wood. In various ways He has tested man, bringing him into all kinds of blessed circumstances and giving him every possible opportunity, so that it became clear who and what man is. It proved to be impossible to bring forth any good out of man. Everything became entirely evident when the wood was cut. On this cut wood the burnt-offering had to be burnt.

The wood is also a type of the Manhood of the Lord Jesus. He was also tested to the full. He encountered all possible circumstances, even more: He *entered* all these circumstances. God thereby tried Him *and all gave proof that everything in Him was to the glory of God*. "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). When He was tempted of the devil for forty days, He did not falter for a moment. Forty days He had not eaten, yet He did not want to eat until God told Him to. And when God laid our sins upon Him and forsook Him so that our Lord had to cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?," He added to it, "But Thou art holy." *That was perfection!*

Then came the moment when Isaac was to be sacrificed. No one was allowed to be present. "Abraham said to his young men, 'Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you' ...and they went both of them together" (vv. 5-6): The wood was on Isaac, the fire and the knife in the hand of Abraham.

Fire is a picture of the holiness of God Who tests and searches; the knife speaks of God's righteousness, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd and even against the Man that is My fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts."

That we see here. Abraham built the altar at the God appointed place and arranged the wood on it. Don't we see 1 Peter 2:24 in this, "Who Himself bore our sins in His body"? But here it is God Who laid them upon Him.

*All thy sins were laid upon Him,
Jesus bore them on the tree;
God, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And, believing, thou art free.¹*

Then, Abraham stretched forth his hand... Yes, the sacrifice had to be a Man, the only Son of God's love, but it wouldn't be Isaac. It would be THE true, only Son. God wanted to make it abundantly clear that salvation came from *Him*, so that later on, whatever faith that was led to sacrifice animals, would be able to see in the offerings that it was the Father Who gave His only well-beloved Son. It had to be a man, but a man without sin. And the Father would provide Him.

So we discover in these first things some great lines of truth. Later on we will find many details, but once we know the great lines, we will also be able to understand the other types.

To be cont'd

QUOTE

There is no use to mourn over your lack of affection for Christ or to try and fan up a bigger flame of love for Him. Self-occupation will never deepen our affection for Christ, but occupation with Him will. We should feel how sluggish our affections are for Him, but it is not by mourning over our coldness, but by meditation upon His love for us that our hearts are warmed up.

E.C.H.

¹ *Inserted by Online Editor – taken from Hymn #35 in Spiritual Songs, Verse 3 – Author: J. Denham Smith (1817-1889)*