

QUOTE

The difficulty of Scripture arises less from difficult language than from unpalatable truth. Truth is contrary to people's wishes; and they cannot see it because they do not like to receive it. A man may not be always conscious of this himself, but it is the real secret that God sees. The obstacle consists in man's dislike of the truth.

W. Kelly

THE OFFERINGS (8)

— H. L. Heijkoop

Leviticus 1:1-4

Sometimes we sing that we are still in the desert being led by the Holy Spirit and that our souls listen to the loving voice of the Holy Spirit during the entire journey. With what or rather with Whom does the Holy Spirit desire to fill our hearts? Always with the person of the Lord Jesus! He is the One Who satisfies all our needs.

In John 4:14 the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst forever." He then explained what this living water is. It is the Word that through the Holy Spirit (Who lives in us) is made living. This Word brings us in connection with the glorified Lord in heaven so that we see His glory; and even now we may enjoy this.

Yet, as long as we are here below in the desert we have many needs. The first one of these is to know what we are for God; we have been made accepted in the Beloved, so that God can look down upon us in love. The second one is to have an object for our heart; that object is the Lord Jesus as He was here on earth. The third need is to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son so that we can enjoy both the Lord and the Father. The fourth need is to know how this fellowship can be restored should a break have occurred.

We find all these things in the first chapters of Leviticus. In chapter 1 we have the burnt-offering which speaks of the wonderful work the Lord Jesus accomplished upon the cross, and more pointedly, of the wonderful *Person* Who accomplished that wonderful work. The Holy Spirit delights to unfold before our eyes the wonderful aspect of that work. He shows us all the glory and perfection of this work finished for us, so that we may know that we stand in the love of God. The Lord Jesus says this in John 17:23, "That they may be perfected into one and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

Then in Leviticus 2 follows the meal-offering or the oblation, which represents the Lord Jesus in His life on earth. He is the Object Whom the Holy Spirit places before our eyes while we are in the desert; a Person Who experienced the same circumstances in which we are now. In it we see how wonderfully He manifested Himself here below. We see the perfection of His Person, with which we may feed our hearts. In the meal-offering we find more or less the same thought presented us by the manna — the food for the believers in the desert.

Chapter 3 gives us the peace-offering, which is the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross as the *foundation* of our fellowship with the Father and with the Son. During our time on earth, in the desert, we are privileged to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. We have the same Object for our hearts as the Father; we enjoy and feed on the same food that satisfies the heart of the Father.

Finally we have in chapters 4 and 5 and in a part of chapter 6, the Lord Jesus as the sin-offering and the trespass-offering. In these we see how fellowship with God can be restored once it has been broken.

It follows from the above comments on Leviticus 1-6 that the subject in these chapters is not the Gospel for sinners. God here is meeting the needs of *His people*. In Exodus we first find redemption, but at the end of the book God comes to dwell in the midst of His people. When God dwells in the midst of His people, He desires to have fellowship with them.

Seen from this view point, the book Leviticus follows Exodus in moral content. This is immediately evident from the first verse, "And Jehovah called to Moses and spoke to him *out of the tent of meeting.*"

Here, God spoke to His people, but it is in the Old Testament, and therefore everything is still contained in types. Truth in its fullness could not yet be revealed because the Lord Jesus had not yet come down to earth and completed the work on the cross: therefore all these things could only be given in typical form. But types never possess the same accuracy as the reality. Besides that, because the work of Christ had not yet been accomplished, the people could not yet understand them. Today the youngest believer can understand them: *he* knows that he stands in God's favour (Romans 5:2). We saw the same imperfection of types when we spoke of Leviticus 16; the sacrifice had to be *repeated* every year, and that we find here in Leviticus 1-6 also. The sin and trespass-offerings were adapted to the condition of the Israelite, who did not know the full extent of redemption.

It is therefore possible to apply these chapters to sinners, but their prime significance is for believers. To really understand the truth we have to allow for the weakness of the Israelite and read these portions in the light of the truth of the New Testament. Doing this we will understand what is said in these portions.

To start with, we have the tent-of-meeting. God not only desires to dwell in the midst of His people, He also wants to have fellowship with them. In Revelation 21 we read that in the eternal state God will dwell in the midst of His own. But then, we will be in the Father's house and will have fellowship with Him, for we have been "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3): *we* will have our share with the Father and with the Son. This shows God's character: besides His desire to live in the midst of His people, He also wishes to *have fellowship* with them, as seen in Ephesians 1:5, "Having marked us out beforehand *for adoption* through Christ Jesus to Himself." He desires to have children for Himself.

For this reason God speaks from "the tent of meeting" (v. 1). Obviously this tent does not typify the Father's house, for Leviticus speaks of the desert. And in the desert the tent of meeting is the place where God dwells in the midst of His people, where God desires to have fellowship with His own. He invites them to come to Him there and from that place, He wishes to speak to them. God certainly blesses all His own, but there is a special place, and all believers are invited to come to that place where He dwells, in His house. In that place are special blessings, for when God invites His people He also desires that those who come, long to do so (Jeremiah 30: 21-22).

By means of Moses, who is a type of the Lord Jesus as the great teacher, God can reveal His heart and convey His thoughts to us, and they are always full of blessing for us. So God instructs us in all that we need. He is a remarkable teacher, full of goodness and grace. He wants to teach us what place we occupy in His favour. But notice the meek manner in which He instructs us. He says, please give Me a little of your heart. This He expects from us.

So we follow Israel's history in Exodus and see how the people had been sheltered by the blood of the lamb, and how God's power had led them out of Egypt and through the desert to be His people. We also observe the other blessings mentioned in Exodus: the tabernacle with all its objects, the priestly service — all those things which present to us the Person of the Lord Jesus. And finally we see how God came to dwell in the midst of His people. Could not God then expect that there would be a longing in the heart of His people to respond to all these blessings? When someone has a share in such things and has so experienced God's mercy, then there must be a longing to respond. Now God pleads with us, He says, "If your heart longs to bring something, then I will tell you what is pleasing to Me."

Sometime ago there was a family staying with us who gave me a box of cigars. But I do not smoke. That family was not aware of this. Had they known this, they would not have given me cigars. When we give something, we like to give something that pleases the recipient. And when we long to give something to God then we desire to know what is pleasing to Him. Well, God says, "Bring Me something that speaks of the Person and the work of my Son: bring Me a burnt-offering."

The sin- and trespass-offerings speak of *our* part, that which the Lord Jesus has done to meet *our* needs. Because of our sin (our nature) and sins (our deeds) we needed a substitute before God. But the Lord Jesus has done much more than what was needed to meet our needs. He glorified God to the utmost even at the very moment He bore our sins, being stricken by God under the most terrible circumstances. He then glorified God as never before, and this is the most precious thing *for God*. The only Man Who had the right to live (since He had never sinned and no sin was in Him) became obedient unto death, the death of the cross. He Who had never committed one sin became so obedient, that He took our sins upon Himself, and in that condition He has declared God. This is the burnt-offering. God has been glorified. His heart has been completely satisfied by this work. All that men had spoiled has been restored by the Lord. And much more than that!

Therefore God says, "If you want to bring something that is pleasing to Me, bring Me a burnt-offering." Does this not touch our hearts? It teaches us what is most important. It shows that *we* are not most important. It shows that what we needed does not come in first place, but that there are higher things. Here we learn what these things are. We learn to lift up our eyes to God. We — miserable creatures — learn not to be occupied with *our* need but to observe the work of the Lord Jesus as God sees it. Thus we learn to know our own insignificance. When our hearts are occupied with *our* needs and, looking at the cross, see only the fact that He died for *our sins*, was made sin *for us*, that there is no judgment left *for us* and that *we* have been redeemed out of all *our misery*, we do not reach the height of our blessings. Our blessings do not merely concern our salvation, but they are positive blessings which we possess even now and also yet will receive. The sin-offering does not speak of these blessings; we find them as the result of the burnt-offering. The sin-offering removed the obstacle that prevented God from blessing us. The burnt-offering provided a righteous foundation upon which God can bless us.

This is what God wants to teach us. But how does He do this? He says, "If your heart wants to give Me something, give Me a burnt-offering." And then we see how all the perfections of the Lord Jesus are described in this sacrifice.

We can look in different ways at the burnt-offering. All who have been occupied with it have seen something beautiful of the Lord Jesus in it; He is the Man from heaven, or, as is evident from verse 10, we see Him as a meek sheep that is led to the slaughter. But there is more than that. We find here a young male of the cattle. The bullock is a type of the consistency in the walk; it can ascend a mountain where a man can hardly walk; it goes with a sure tread. When we seriously contemplate the Lord, we notice this firm walk, especially in His work upon the cross. This aspect of the burnt-offering is specifically found in John's gospel, where we see how the Lord Jesus steadfastly followed His path. He was determined to go that way and nothing was able to deter Him from it. Neither the betrayal by Judas, nor the fact that His disciples left Him, nor the beatings of the soldiers, nor the hatred of men nor even the judgment of God that fell upon Him, deterred Him. Therefore He could say in John 10:17-18, "On this account the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." And in Hebrews 9:14 we read that He by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God.

When we have been much occupied with the Lord in this manner we gain great insight into His work and God expects from us that we bring this to Him. We do not have any excuse to know little about the Lord's work upon the cross. God has given us His entire Word in which everything has been revealed and the Holy Spirit makes it living within us (John 4:14). Why then do we understand so little of the work of the Lord Jesus? It may be because one has only recently been converted and hasn't had the time to search the Word. But from an "adult" in the faith, God may rightfully expect "a young bullock."

We are told in verse 3, "if His offering be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall present it a male without blemish; at the entrance of the tent of meeting shall he present it." Oh, certainly, God desires that we often speak about the glory of the Lord Jesus, for Hebrews 13:15 says that we should bring "the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips confessing His name." But there is a *place* where God particularly desires that we bring our worship — the place where He invites us around Himself, where the family of God meets around the Lord, where "the tent of meeting" is, that is to say, the house of God. I do not refer to a building, but to the Assembly, the house of God. God desires that we meet there and bring the fruit of our studies — not the understanding, but the *feelings of love* for that wonderful Person. When we meet each other in this way on Lord's Day mornings with everyone thinking of the things he has gathered about this work during the week, the Lord by His Spirit will be able to use what He has produced. Then our collective worship will be true worship, for then the Holy Spirit will be able to use the hearts of all and the worship of the whole Assembly will be much more perfect than that which I can bring alone.

But what we learn of the Lord during the week is a *personal* matter. Therefore verse 2 is in the singular, "*When any man of you* presents an offering to Jehovah," and when someone approaches God in this way it will be "accepted for *him*" (v. 4). Abel is an example of this. Abel brought of the first-born of his sheep and of their fat, and God's Word says, "And Jehovah looked upon Abel, and on His offering" (Genesis 4:4). We ourselves have been made accepted before God: on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus we have become objects of God's love. But when we come, filled with that what occupies *His* heart, would not our presentation also be accepted before God, because we bring Him what is precious for *His* heart?

The offerer had to lay his hand on the head of the burnt-offering: he had to make himself *one* with that burnt-offering. In Leviticus 16 we saw that Aaron as representative of the people also laid his hand on the head of the buck of the goats, transferring thereby the sins of the people to the buck. This act connected the people with the goat and then the goat carried the judgment of the sins of the people. Likewise, the Lord Jesus has made Himself one with us, to bear the judgment for our sins as if they were His own. In Psalm 40:12 He said, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me." We know however that they were our iniquities.

With the burnt-offering it is the opposite: the man laid his hand on the head of the burnt-offering and all that was pleasing to God in the offering was transferred to the offerer. God saw him as one with the sacrifice. That is what is expressed in Ephesians 1:6, "He has taken us into favour in the Beloved." This thought is not clearly mentioned here, we find it clearly expressed in Leviticus 7. There we see that the priest, who brought the burnt-offering, received the skin thereof (v. 8). From Genesis 3 we know what the skin signifies. The priest was allowed to dress himself with the skin so that he displayed all what was beautiful and perfect in the burnt-offering.

Although then this thought of providing a covering for the offerer is not *expressly* stated in Leviticus 1, we nevertheless read in verse 4, "He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to *make atonement for him*." The Hebrew word for *atonement* has in its primary form the significance of *covering*; the base form of this word is the same as for the word *mercy-seat*, it covered the tables of stone of the law with the blood. We find the same word back in Genesis 6:14 where the ark was covered with pitch: *covered* or *pitched* is the same word as to *atone*. This clearly shows the significance of the skin of the sacrifice. The priest received that skin and clothed himself with it (not to cover his sins, but to cloth himself with all the glories of the sacrifice) so that God would see him with all these excellencies.

Now that we realize that we have been made accepted in the Beloved, we also understand John 17:23, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." We can understand that the Father loved the Lord, for what an object of satisfaction for God was the life of the Lord Jesus on earth! But can God love me, with all my weaknesses and my failures when I am sinful, disobedient and so often cold-hearted? However, when I see that I am clothed with the perfections of the Lord Jesus, then I understand that the Father loves me. If He loved the Lord Jesus when He completed the work upon the cross, He must love me, for I am clothed with this Person.

What a beautiful revelation of what we are in the eyes of God! The Holy Spirit wants to make this fact clear to us. When during the journey through the wilderness we notice our weaknesses and the wickedness of our nature, the Holy Spirit says that we in God's eyes are as His Son: God sees us in Him. Let us look at the Lord in all the glory of His work, all His perfections are put to our account, for God sees us clothed with Him. What a comfort, what a peace and rest for our hearts, what a power to continue our journey quietly, even in the wilderness!

To be cont'd

GOD'S PURPOSE

— *John van Dijk*

It is common for us to look at the relationship between God and man from man's vantage point. From there we observe how God evaluates man's relationship with Him. We observe what God has done for man, how God has changed the relationship from one of enmity to one of fellowship. Our point of view shifts however when we start to consider God's purpose. Then Christ becomes the center, and we see how God has come in to give companions to His Son, for His glory and pleasure. Yet, man has a place in this too, a place prepared through the grace of God.

Initially it is of course entirely impossible for anyone to look at his relationship with God from any other point of view than man's. Man, spiritually blind as he is, is not capable to look at spiritual matters other than at his own responsibility towards God.

So, when the Word of God addresses a sinner, he will be aroused by the fact that, through the sins he has committed, he has lost every degree of fellowship with his Creator (Ephesians 2:12). The only relationship left for him is that of the guilty one before his righteous Judge (Acts 17:31; Romans 14:11). At this point a critical moment has been reached in the individual's life. What will he do with the facts with which he has been confronted? God in His grace presents to him the fact of His love shown in the Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. In Him God has met all that flows from the guilt of man (2 Corinthians 5:19). But the question is, will the individual accept the grace of God, or will he reject it? From this moment on men fall in one of two classes in their relationship with God. There are those who follow Cain's path, considering their sin to be greater than that it can be forgiven (Genesis 4:13), and there are those who realize that their only hope for mercy can be found with the God Whom they have so grossly dishonoured (Luke 18:13). On the first, the wrath of God abides (John 3: 36); the others enter into an entirely new relationship with God: they receive the right to be called children of God (John 1:12).

From here on, we concern ourselves with the latter ones, all those who have accepted God's mercy shown in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus. They have received a new nature, life from God Himself (John 3:5). They have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). We read glorious

things about all those who have made confession of faith in Christ, for God now presents to each of these persons His thoughts about their new relationship with Himself. God shows that as far as their eternal security and their relationship to God is concerned there cannot be any improvement. It is all entirely established on the basis of the Person and the work of Christ. They share now all the blessings in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). This glorious reality is the basis for the Christian's hope and security.

It is most important to realize that without the blessed truth we have just alluded to, there would be nothing but doubt and despair for the Christian. For in the Christian himself, in his flesh, no good dwells, and this is his practical experience (Romans 7:18). His life is hid with Christ in God, but as long as he lives on earth he has to put on the new man (Colossians 3:10, 12). To do so however, requires occupation with Christ, with God's thoughts about Christ and all that God has purposed in Him, Christ's glory (Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 3:18). This touches the practical side of the Christian life most intimately. *We cannot be occupied with Christ unless we know the things concerning Him, God's thoughts about Him.* The Christian must grow, and Christian growth is closely related to knowing, it is growing in the knowledge of the things of Christ.

In all that we have looked at so far, man was the center of our considerations, we looked from man's vantage point, and we saw what God, in Christ, has done for man. Although we only hastily touched upon the various aspects of it, we have nevertheless seen some of the most blessed truths, the greatest things God has done for them who love Him. A song wells up in our heart: What love, what grace, has been shown to us in Christ Jesus! And yet there is more to be seen and deeper things to be considered. God's Word has also given us insight into His purposes; He has spoken to us about them. When we consider these however, we must take another vantage point to take fully in what God has done. For in God's purposes it is not of prime importance what God has done *for us*, but rather what God has done *for Christ*! It is the marvel of God's grace that viewing God's Word with this basic thought in mind, we do not disappear but rather are found to play an important part in all God's thoughts. Nor do our blessings disappear but they seem to gain in depth and luster beyond what the human mind could ever conceive. And, as an added mercy of God, we have a tremendous promise in God's Word, that we will be transformed by God's Spirit into the image of Christ, when we are occupied with Christ's glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

To be cont'd

QUESTIONS

- Who were the three people who appeared before Abraham in Genesis 18?
- To whom did Abraham bow himself?

ANSWERS

I like to speak frankly in answering these questions. It is good to seek help from fellow brothers when questions come up for which we do not seem to be able to find answers in God's Word. But before asking others, we ought to ask God, and we should consider the things His Word says on the subject.

Let us read Genesis 18 and 19 for ourselves. Now, may I draw your attention in particular to chapter 18:1, "And *Jehovah* appeared to him (Abraham)." Then we should take note of what verses 16 and 22 of the same chapter and verse 1 of the next chapter say: "And the men rose up thence, and *looked toward Sodom*. And the men turned thence, and *went towards Sodom*; and Abraham remained standing before Jehovah. And *the two angels came to Sodom* at even." God's Word identifies the three persons as Jehovah Himself accompanied by two angels. Verse 2 and 3 of chapter 18 show that Abraham bowed himself before these three, but in particular before the Lord, since he addresses Him. As we know from Revelation 19:10, angels do not accept it when men fall down before them. So here, Abraham only bows himself because God is present.

But I would like to ask a question of my questioner. Now that you have my answer, do you still think that it was really necessary to ask these questions? You see how the answers to these questions were available to you from the immediate text surrounding the verses you referred to. There are many questions that are difficult to answer because one needs a good knowledge and understanding of the Word to be able to do so. Certainly these two did not fall into that class.

But perhaps you were troubled by some who try to bring doubt in your mind as to the reliability of the Word of God. If this is the case, let this be a warning to all of us. Those who cause us to doubt the simple message of God's Word (be it by

intent or through ignorance of God on their part) are being used as messengers of Satan. He used this ploy to cause Eve to fall, he will try it again. Stay away!