

THE OFFERINGS (20)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Leviticus 4:1-21

From our previous studies you may recall what the sin-offering in the fourth chapter speaks of. It is not the work the Lord Jesus has completed for sinners: it is not the gospel; the gospel we find in chapter 16. Chapter 4 relates to a believer who sins, and in chapters 4 and 5 various cases are treated. When a believer sins it has no effect on his eternal salvation. Anyone who has accepted the Lord Jesus is uninterruptedly prepared for eternity. But when a believer sins the fellowship with the Father is interrupted and when, as here, the entire assembly has sinned the fellowship with the Father of the entire assembly is interrupted.

Therefore we have here the case of the anointed priest who, as we have seen, is a type of all who are practically priests. Although only one person is mentioned here, I believe that this one priest represents all in the assembly who are practically priests. And when *they* sin it is clear that the entire assembly loses its fellowship with the Father. The sons of Aaron enter the sanctuary to bring there the spiritual sacrifices for the people; when they have sinned, they can naturally not enter to bring these sacrifices, and so all fellowship with God is interrupted.

In the second case, that wherein the entire assembly has sinned, it is rather obvious that there can be no fellowship between God and the assembly. But when a single believer sins that is not so clear. The difference is apparent from the verses we will read later. Since the *priests* must bring the offering when the whole assembly has sinned it is obvious that the case of the priest who has sinned has to be mentioned first of all. If the priest has not been cleansed, he cannot perform the representative service and bring about the restoration of the assembly.

Now let us look at verse 3. It says, "According to the trespass of the people," that is to say, in the way someone from the people would have done it. It is very serious when an anointed priest sins just as one from among the people. But it is also possible to translate this verse differently and perhaps more correctly: "If he has sinned thereby bringing guilt over the people." Indeed the priest is the people's representative before God and when he has sinned the fellowship of the people with God is broken; through his sin guilt is put upon the people. This is a very serious thought: what someone does has results for others. The higher the position the Lord has given us, the more serious the results when we sin. That is the lesson here.

Consequently, when an anointed priest had sinned he had to take a young bullock, just as the entire assembly when it had sinned, whereas we find lesser sacrifices in later cases. In chapter 5 for instance, we find cases wherein only a few birds were sacrificed and even one case where a handful of flour was used. God does not expect the same thing from everyone. The same holds true for sinners; in Revelation 20:13 it says that the dead will be judged "according to their works." All unbelievers will be cast into hell, yet the punishment will not be the same for all. The Lord speaks of "the outer darkness" and one may conclude of this that there is also an inner darkness; He also speaks of those who will be beaten with many stripes and of those who will receive few (Luke 12:47-48).

So it is with us, believers. Not everyone's responsibilities are the same, and God does not expect the same from everyone. When someone who has been just converted commits a sin, God does not expect the same thing from him as from an older brother who has committed the very same sin. The first one has not yet, in God's presence, learned who God is, he has not yet studied the Word and God takes account of this. But when someone has been in fellowship for a long time and knows the Word, if he has had years of fellowship with the Lord and knows the truth practically, then he is under a much greater responsibility and God expects more from him. When such a person sins it is much more serious, and God expects a much greater repentance of him.

Now let us return to the priest who had to sacrifice a young bullock for an offering. At the cross he has to come to a full understanding of the seriousness of the case. But there he also has to learn how great the work of the Lord Jesus is and to realize for himself how terrible sin is. He has to do this in the presence of the Lord, he has to appear before his face, to see there how the Lord has died for that sin. Through his many years of experience the priest has learned how much the Lord had to suffer. Now God expects from him who has understood a little of the great suffering of the Lord Jesus upon the cross, that he realizes how serious the sin is that he has committed. In bringing his sacrifice he says as it were, "Even if no

other man had sinned and I had committed only this one sin, then the Lord would still have had to die and to undergo all this suffering." Thereby he expresses how terrible his sin is before God.

In verse 4 we find the next thing: "And he shall bring the bullock to the entrance of the tent of meeting before Jehovah." Yes, "before the face of the Lord"; it is always a question between the believer and God. But the priest was not allowed to do it in his own tent, nor even near his tent, but at the entrance of the tent of meeting, that is to say at the place where God meets His people. The priest lived outside the tent of meeting. If he had sinned, he had to take a young bullock and had to go with it through the camp to the tent of meeting; all the people could see it. When he arrived there he had to slaughter the animal there. Although it was before the face of the Lord, all who were at the tent of meeting saw it. True humility will never seek to hide sin for others. We see how Moses acknowledged his sin, and so did Peter. Men of God have never tried to hide the sin they had committed. If men see the evil done before God's face, they do not try to hide it fearfully before men. I do not mean that one should go and openly announce: I have done this or that. No matter how humble that might appear to some, it would only be self-glorification. But in the awareness that the matter is before God's face, one will not seek to hide it with fear and trembling from men, for before God it weighs heavier upon our heart than before men. Don't we know this out of daily practice? When someone has sinned and one speaks with him, he will, if he is truly low and humble, not try to hide his guilt or to minimize it, but he will openly acknowledge what he has done. Frank confession before God is necessary. But anyone who has so confessed his sin before God will also confess it frankly before men. He will acknowledge that only grace will keep him from greater sins.

"And he shall lay his hands on the bullock's head, and slaughter the bullock before Jehovah" (v. 4). In this manner he had to make himself one with the sacrifice. It is as if one says to God, "The Lord Jesus has been made sin upon the cross and I am one with Him in His death. But He has died for me, in my stead." It is a sin-offering; he does not only say: He has died for my *sins*, but He has died for *me* because I was so wicked that God could only execute judgment over me. We see this in Psalm 51. David had sinned and he did not only confess his sin, but he judged himself, he went back to the source of the sin; "Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (v. 7). This is true humiliation. God expects that a priest not only judges his deed, but also his condition. Why did God not keep him from committing this sin? It proves that his condition was not good. When one is in fellowship with the Lord, there is no need to sin.

The anointed priest had to take the blood and bring it into the tent of meeting. In verse 6 we read what more he had to do: "And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before Jehovah before the veil of the sanctuary." A priest enters into the sanctuary, and Hebrews 10:19 says that we have "boldness to enter into the sanctuary," but when we have sinned we cannot enter. However, when we have confessed our sin with true humiliation, when we have seen the Lord upon the cross and seen how terrible it all has been for Him, then we also see that His work has been sufficient for that sin. Then we may enter again into the sanctuary, for the blood is there. Seven times the priest had to sprinkle the blood before the Lord. This sevenfold sprinkling was not needed for God but for us and seven speaks of the perfect testimony of the power of the blood. From that moment on we have once again full liberty to enter in and to bring sacrifices.

Then we have another thing in verse 7: "And the priest shall put of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense, which is in the tent of meeting before Jehovah; and he shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting." Once again it is before the Lord, but on the horns of the altar of incense, that is the place where the fragrant spices were burnt. We know that incense speaks of the personal glories of the Lord Jesus; we saw this in Leviticus 16. It is therefore the place of worship in the presence of God, in the sanctuary. Here it is not connected with the work of the Lord Jesus, but with His Person; nor is it, as in the meal offering, a reference to the outward manifestation of His life. The incense speaks of the personal glory of the Lord as seen by God and as we may bring it in worship to God. But when the priest has sinned, that altar has been defiled by his sin. This is a serious thought. We will see this once more, when the sin of the assembly is spoken of.

Let me make this clear with an example of our day. On Sunday morning we are present at the Lord's table, which speaks of the death of the Lord and of His coming to put away sin, as Hebrews 9:26 says it. Would it be indifferent if we came to sit at a defiled table? In 1 Corinthians 11 we notice this. Because the Corinthians did not cleanse themselves, the judgment of God rested upon them: several of them were sick and not a few slept. When I come with an unjudged sin, the Lord's table will be defiled by my sin. Similarly the priest who continually served in the sanctuary had to be aware that the golden altar had been defiled by his sin. Undoubtedly, the blood of the Lord Jesus is sufficient for this, this we noticed in Leviticus 16. That blood had to be applied, that is to say we have to confess our sin, but we must also show God that the work of the Lord Jesus is sufficient for it. This way our fellowship with God is restored.

The remaining blood was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt-offering, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, at the place where the people met. This is a picture of the Lord's table. What I wrote a little earlier was only by way of

clarification, for the golden altar is not a type of the Lord's table, the brazen altar is that. There the remaining blood had to be poured out, to show that all is cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

I do not know whether this is sufficiently clear. Perhaps someone may think that the blood has to be shed anew. That would not be correct: the blood has been shed once and for all. At the moment when a sinner believes the glad tidings, he is sprinkled with that blood, and never again afterwards. Later the water is applied, as we can see at the washing of the feet. There the Word of God is applied to heart and conscience causing self-judgment whereby the believer is cleansed (1 John 1:9). But the blood speaks of what has taken place upon the cross. It, in the first place, causes us to be aware of the seriousness of our sin, because the Lord Jesus had to die on the cross for it. Secondly, it reminds us that the Lord has died bearing the judgment over the sin. Then, 1 John 2:1-2, speaking of the sin which we still commit, says: "If anyone sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." Here we see what is represented by the blood.

Then verses 8-10 speak about the fat. All the fat and the kidneys had to be brought upon the brazen altar and the priest had to burn it there. This we do not find in Leviticus 16 but only here. It reminds us of the peace-offering and shows us:

1. that the Lord Jesus is not only the sin-offering, but also the burnt-offering;
2. that our sins have not only been washed away, but that we have been brought into God's favour;
3. so that we may have fellowship with God.

These three things are shown us in the peace-offering which is alluded to here.

Then follows verse 12: "The whole bullock shall he carry forth outside the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out shall it be burned." Yes, it had to be a clean place, but it was there where the ashes were poured out; and it was burned with fire upon the wood. This reminds us of what the judgment meant to the Lord Jesus. As I said before, the sin-offering speaks of the condition of man, of his sinful nature which cannot exist before God, and which is so corrupt that God cannot use it for anything. When the Lord Jesus was made sin, *He* had to die and His work on the cross is put to our account. In God's eyes we have died with Christ. Romans 6:11 says that we must make this a reality for ourselves through faith, and Colossians 3:9 says that we have put off the old man with his works. But when I sin, I must acknowledge that I have again given a place to that old man; I have not kept him in the place of death. If I had made it a practical truth that I am dead, the old man would not have been able to find a place with me. Now I must see anew that I have died with Christ, yes, that Christ was made sin for me. When He made Himself one with my nature, God could not do otherwise then to condemn Him. That certainly shows how terrible my sin is.

But it had to be burnt at a clean place. When the Lord Jesus was made sin and had to die under the judgment of God because He bore my sins, He personally was perfectly holy. It is most important for us to be reminded of this. In Psalm 40:13 the Lord Jesus says, "My unrighteousnesses have taken hold upon Me." *My* unrighteousnesses have been made His, He has been made sin, and so God has smitten *Him*. Yet, He was the holy One, the True. But when He was made sin, it was for us, and when He took upon Himself all the billions of sins of the believers, calling them His sins, and undergoing the judgment for them, just as if He had committed them, He was nevertheless perfectly holy in Himself. Because He had to take upon Himself all those sins which He hated, everything has been terrible for Him, for in Himself He was pure. God never forgets this and neither should we ever forget it.

To be cont'd

THE FAITH TO CONTEND FOR (8)

—R. K. Campbell

7. Separation unto God from Evil.

In the Bible God's people were always called to walk apart from sin and evil in separation unto Himself. This was true in every age and dispensation. We shall see throughout the Scriptures that a sanctified life, which is separation to God from evil, was that which God required of those He redeemed from the bondage of sin and Satan. Therefore this principle of a walk of separation unto the Lord and apart from iniquity by those who profess to be God's children is a vital tenet of the Christian faith, which we must contend for.

The early Patriarchs in the Book of Genesis were characterized by a life of devotedness unto God in separation from evil. Enoch walked with God three hundred years and testified against the ungodliness of his day (Gen. 5:21-24; Jude 14-15). Noah was a preacher of righteousness and warned of coming judgment. Abraham lived as a stranger and a pilgrim with a tent and an altar to Jehovah God. Of Israel, God said: "I am Jehovah your God, who have separated you from the peoples... ye shall be holy unto Me; for I Jehovah am holy, and have separated you from the peoples to be Mine" (Lev. 20:24-26). Moses asked the Lord, "How shall it be known that I have found grace in Thine eyes — I and Thy people? Is it not by Thy going with us? so shall we be distinguished, I and Thy people, from every people that is on the face of the earth" (Ex. 33:16). It is the Lord's presence with His own that separates them from evil, for He is a holy and righteous God and cannot behold evil or look on iniquity (Hab. 1:13).

In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, a remnant returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity. They were joined by "all such as had separated themselves to them from the filthiness of the nations of the land, to seek Jehovah the God of Israel" to eat the Passover (Ezra 6:21). In Nehemiah 9:2 we read that "the seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins."

The book of Psalms opens with a notable verse stressing separation: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the seat of scorers" (Ps. 1:1). This wonderful verse was especially true of the Lord Jesus Christ who walked constantly in communion with His God. Though in marvelous grace He received sinners and ate with them to bring them out of sin, He never walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, or sat down in the seat of the scornful. Neither should His disciples walk in fellowship with the ungodly. The Lord said to His disciples: "Ye are not of the world (i.e.: Satan's world system), but I have chosen you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you" (John 15:19). Later He prayed to the Father for them, saying, "I demand... that Thou shouldst keep them out of evil. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. Sanctify them (or set them apart) by the truth: Thy Word is truth" (John 17:15-17). The Lord's desire for His own was and is that they would be separated from the evil in the world.

In the book of Acts we see the early Church continuing together in a happy community of fellowship in the apostle's doctrine, receiving "their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people; and the Lord added to the Assembly daily those that were to be saved" (Acts 2:46-47). They were separated in holy consecration unto the Lord and through their happy testimony souls were saved and added to the Church. Later we read that the churches throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria were "edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31).

Paul, the apostle, exhorted the Corinthians, saying: "Let us purify ourselves from every pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear" (2 Cor. 7:1). The apostle Peter wrote believers: "As He who has called you is holy, be ye also holy in all your conversation" (or: "manner of life" — 1 Pet. 1:15). The apostle Paul also wrote the Corinthians, "Wherefore come out from the midst of them (of those who deny Christ), and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17).

Thus we see that separation from evil and devoted consecration to the Lord is insisted upon throughout the Bible. It is only in this way that communion with the Lord in the liberty and power of the Holy Spirit can be maintained. Then there will be powerless testimony to the unsaved as they see a difference in our manner of life and joy of heart. So we can certainly see from Scripture that separation of Christians unto God from evil is a vital part of the Christian faith to be insisted upon and contended for.

8. The Church of the Living God — Its Character.

In one of our earlier studies, we spoke of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the believer's life. We mentioned that the Lord Jesus is exalted in heaven as Head of the Church and that He sent forth the Holy Spirit in a new and fuller way to indwell believers in Christ and to dwell in the Church as "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Acts 2:32-33; Eph. 2:18-22). We also showed from Scripture that the baptism of the Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, when, as the apostle Paul later wrote, "In the power of one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). This "one body" of believers is called "the Church" of which Christ is the one and only Head (see Eph. 1:22-23 and Col. 1:18). This Church is also spoken of as "God's House, which is the Assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

We have also seen in a previous study that the Spirit of God has formed a unity of believers in Jesus Christ which we are to recognize and keep (Eph. 4:3-4). This unity of the Spirit is made by the divine formation of converted believers in Christ into one body. He unites them to Christ as their Head and to one another by His indwelling each one. Thus we have:

1. Jesus Christ is in heaven as the Head of the Church,
2. the Church of the living God is Christ's body on earth,
3. the members of that body are united together by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, and they are also united to Christ the body's Head, with the indwelling Spirit energizing and directing its members.

This divinely formed body of Christ on earth cannot be any denominational body or organization formed by human efforts, for it embraces all true born-again, Spirit-indwelt believers in Christ. This is God's Church, the Church of the living God. It is not a human organization but a *living organism*.

In this Church, the Holy Spirit is given by Christ the place of the only Administrator and the true Vicar and Vicegerent (representative) of Himself on earth. He carries out the directions of the true Head in heaven. This, the divine history Book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul bear testimony to. He was given this sovereign place in the early Church and should be granted His rightful place in the Church today.

The ministry and spiritual functions in the Church of the living God are to be carried out by the gifts Christ has given to His Church. Ephesians 4:7-12 teaches us that "to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ"; and that when Christ ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men: "He has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints: with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ." These are the permanent gifts that continue to the Lord's coming for His Church as verse 13 implies. Other gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 which were found in the early Corinthian Church.

We need a divine gift from Christ to function as an evangelist, as a preacher of the gospel, as a teacher of the Word of God, or as a shepherd of God's sheep etc.; dependence upon the Holy Spirit in the exercise of such gifts makes one a qualified minister in the Church of God. This is divine ordination and the spiritual provision with which no schools of men can equip one, nor can would-be "ecclesiastical authorities" confer this upon anyone. Even to the elders it is said, "Take heed... to all the flock wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the Assembly of God, which He has purchased with the blood of His own" (Acts 20:17, 28).

The true Church of God is thus universal and catholic in character as the one body of Christ on earth. It is international and interracial. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is no Jew nor Greek: there is no bondmen nor freemen; there is no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Any local assembly of believers in Christ should seek to be a representation or a miniature of the whole body of Christ, a replica of the universal Church in a locality, functioning in the unity of the Spirit, not in independence. So a scriptural local assembly should be characterized by the following Biblical features:

1. The Lord Jesus should be the gathering centre according to Matthew 18:20, John 20:19-21, 1 Peter 2:4 etc.
2. The ground of gathering together should be the one body of believers in Christ.¹
3. The Holy Spirit should be given His divine place as Leader and President.
4. The ministry should be by those gifted of Christ for particular service under the guidance and liberty of the Spirit of God.
5. The priesthood of all believers to approach God with spiritual sacrifices of praise, worship and prayer must be recognized according to 1 Peter 2:5, 9.
6. The Bible alone must be the authority and guidebook.
7. Holiness and separation from evil should be the practice of life.

An assembly of believers characterized by the foregoing principles would not be a sect, but a local representation of the universal Church of the living God, though perhaps in great weakness and feebleness.

Much more remains to be said from Scripture as to the Church of God and the truths related to it which we are to earnestly contend for. In our next study we propose taking up the hope of the Church.

To be cont'd

¹ *Note by Editor: Not only locally expressed — i.e. in independence of other assemblies so gathered — but expressed on a world wide basis by the mutual recognition of assemblies and a common discipline.*