

# Costly Sacrifices

JESUS PAID IT ALL

# Costly Sacrifices

Sunday School Lesson

March 23, 2025

Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Leviticus 1:1-17



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# **Sunday School Lesson Overview**

**March 23, 2025**

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# **Sunday School Lesson Overview**

**March 23, 2025**

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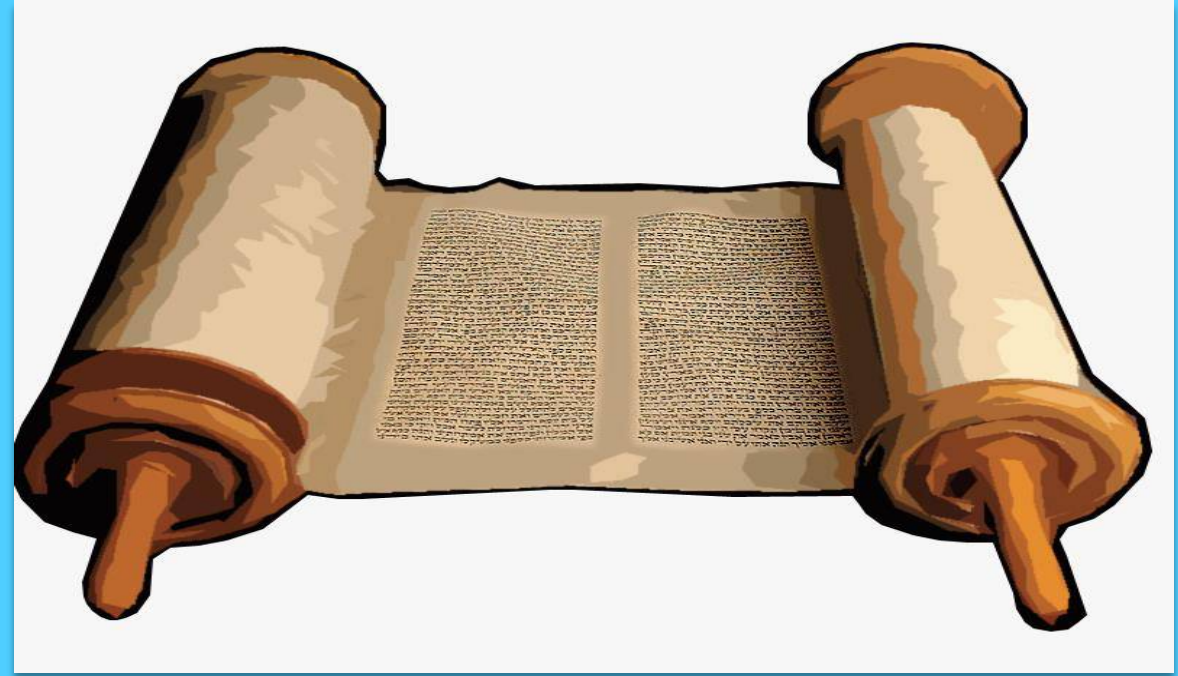
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# Lesson Aims

**Identify God's key expectations for burnt offerings.**

Compare and contrast the expectation of an unblemished sacrifice with that of 1 Peter 1:19.



1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV) states:  
"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

## **Points of Information – Leviticus**

**The Book of Leviticus is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the five books known as the ‘**Pentateuch**.’ Moses is credited as the author. Date of writing: 1445-1444 B.C.**

****Purpose:** A handbook for the priests and Levites outlining their duties in worship, and a guidebook of holy living for the Hebrews.**

## THE BLUEPRINT

### A. WORSHIPING A HOLY GOD

1. Instructions for the offerings
2. Instructions for the priests
3. Instructions for the people
4. Instructions for the altar

### B. LIVING A HOLY LIFE

1. Standards for the people
2. Rules for priests
3. Seasons and feasts
- 4. Receiving God's blessing**

## KEY SCRIPTURES

Leviticus 1:4 → **Lay your hand on the animal's head, and the Lord will accept its death in your place to purify you, making you right with him.**

Leviticus 19:2 → **“Give the following instructions to the entire community of Israel. You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.**

Leviticus 17:11 → for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the Lord. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible.



## Book of Worship

**Under the covenant of Sinai, these rituals were integral parts of the proper worship of God.**

**Leviticus instructs God's people under the **old covenant** how they are to approach, honor, and offer sacrifices to Him so that their covenant relationship remains firm.**

## Lesson Context

**Leviticus contains the most thorough instructions on the proper forms and procedures for the worship of God: the “where” and “how” for worship.**

## Lesson Context

**Holiness refers to a state of being set apart, including both ritual and ethical purity.**

**The words “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2) are directed not only to all the people of ancient Israel but to all of God’s people through time (1 Peter 1:15-16).**

## Leviticus, Ch. 1

### What Do You Think?

Which most motivates you to worship: the  
“**where**” or the “**how**”?

### Digging Deeper

Which of these passages help you most:

**John 4:23-24**; **Acts 2:46-47**; **Hebrews 9:1**;  
**12:28**?

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Text – SLC Outline #1

▶ Leviticus 1:3-9

▶ An Offering from the Herd

# Key Concepts To Look For

**Preparation**

**Process**

**Purpose**

**Participation**

**Purification**

**Praise**

**Presentation**

## Questions to Ponder

**Why do you think God gave such detailed laws to the Israelites?”**

**What can we learn about God's character through Leviticus?**

**What does holiness mean to us?**

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:1-2)

1-2 The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of meeting. He said,  
**“Speak to the Israelites and say to them:  
‘When anyone among you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.**

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:3-9)

3-4 **“If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the Lord.**

You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you.

## Burnt Offerings for the Old Testament

**The burnt offering is the first of several kinds of sacrifices in the book of Leviticus. The burnt offering is mentioned first, perhaps because it was the most committal: the one presenting the sacrifice received nothing tangible back.**

**Burnt offerings are mentioned about 270 times in the Old Testament. Their association with atonement makes study of them important in light of New Testament passages such as Mark 12:33 and Hebrews 10:1-14.**

Leviticus, Ch. 1

An Offering from  
the Herd

The directive to sacrifice only animals without defect is repeated in **Deuteronomy 15:21**.

**This command emphasizes that God deserves the best of one's herds rather than the worst.**

**Leviticus 22:17-33** gives an extended warning against unacceptable sacrifices.

The added specification that the blemish-free sacrifice be male **foreshadows** the sacrifice of Jesus (**Hebrews 9:14**; **1 Peter 1:19**).

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to ensure **that you offer “the best” to Christ?**

**The Lord was to be worshipped on his terms and at the sole place designated for that purpose.** He instituted strict penalties for performing sacrifices in any other location (**17:1-4**).

**Deuteronomy 12:11-14** reiterates the necessity of a centralized worship site, anticipating the future temple in Jerusalem.

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:3-9)

5-6 You are to slaughter the young bull **before the Lord, and then Aaron's sons** the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.

The use of blood, as described, functions as a mechanism of **purification**. It reinforced the principle of **atonement** since, as the Lord later declared, “The life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (**Leviticus 17:11**).

## Leviticus, Ch. 1

### An Offering from the Herd

#### Preparing the animal (v. 6)

**“ ‘You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.**

The next step was the removal of the animal's hide. This might be either prior to or simultaneous with cutting the carcass into pieces. Both would speed up the burning process. **Leviticus 7:8** directed that the priest officiating at the burnt offering should receive the animal's hide.

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:3-9)

7-8 The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire.

**Then Aaron's sons the priests shall** arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar.

**Only priests were allowed to carry out the act of sacrificing the animal prepared for the burnt offering.**

**The phrase put fire on the altar does not mean “to start the fire,” because the fire for this altar was to burn continuously (Leviticus 6:9-13). The idea, instead, is to stoke the fire.**

Leviticus, Ch. 1

An Offering from  
the Herd

Presenting the sacrifice (v. 8)

“ **Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall** arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar.

**Exodus 29:13** and **Leviticus 8:20; 9:13** specify the pieces in greater detail.

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:3-9)

2 You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

## Leviticus, Ch. 1

### An Offering from the Herd

**The resulting smoke that creates an aroma pleasing to the Lord attributes a human characteristic—a sense of smell—to God. This is anthropomorphic language.**

**Even though God is spirit, the Scriptures speak of him as having physical characteristics (examples: Psalm 34:15-16; John 12:38). Here, the sense of smell depicts how the Lord was pleased with the burnt offering as presented in the manner set forth in the text.**

Leviticus, Ch. 1

An Offering from  
the Herd

**To summarize, the ritual involved these steps:**

- 1. Place hand on the animal's head**
- 2. Slay the animal**
- 3. Splash animal blood against the sides of the altar**
- 4. Remove the hide from the carcass**
- 5. Dismember the carcass**
- 6. Stoke the altar fire**
- 7. Arrange wood on the altar**
- 8. Arrange body pieces and fat on the altar fire**
- 9. Wash internal organs and legs**
- 10. Burn all except hide to create smoke pleasing to the Lord**

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Text – SLC Outline #2

- ▶ Leviticus 1:10-13
- ▶ An Offering from the Flock

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:10-13)

10-11 **“If the offering is a burnt offering** from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male without defect.

You are to slaughter it at the north side of **the altar before the Lord, and Aaron’s** sons the priests shall splash its blood against the sides of the altar.

**For this kind of offering, sheep or goats that were male without defect were interchangeable with a young bull, just discussed. We see male goats and sheep themselves as interchangeable for Passover in Exodus 12:5.**

**Either goats or sheep were acceptable for fellowship offerings, with either male or female allowed (Leviticus 3).**

**Either bulls, male or female goats, or female lambs are allowed for sin or trespass offerings, depending on the nature of the sin.**

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:10-13)

12-13 You are to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar.

You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of them and burn them on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God

Text – SLC Outline #3

- ▶ Leviticus 1:14-17
- ▶ An Offering of Birds

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:14-17)

14-16 **“If the offering to the Lord is a burnt offering of birds, you are to offer a dove or a young pigeon.**

The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar.

He is to remove the crop and the feathers and throw them down east of the altar where the ashes are.

## Leviticus, Ch. 1

### An Offering of Birds

**This option for a burnt offering was provided for people who could not afford to bring the aforementioned offerings from a herd or flock.**

**Such an option was also provided for women after childbirth who could not afford to offer a lamb for the burnt offering of purification (**12:8**).**

**One may recall the sacrifice that Joseph and Mary offered following the birth of Jesus (**Luke 2:24**).**

## Leviticus, Ch. 1

### An Offering of Birds

**The procedure for offering a bird as a burnt offering differed from that prescribed for offerings from the herd or the flock. Whereas the blood of the animals that were sacrificed was sprinkled around the altar of burnt offering, the bird's blood was to be drained out on the side of the altar.**

**Though the bird's blood would not be nearly as abundant as that of the other animals, the need to separate its blood from its body must be completed. Israelites were forbidden to eat blood (7:10-14).**

# Offering a Sweet Aroma to God (Leviticus 1:14-17)

17 He shall tear it open by the wings, not dividing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is burning on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

As followers of Jesus, our duty is to offer to God, not burnt sacrifices of animals or birds, but our lives as a “living sacrifice” (**Romans 12:1**).

Our sacrifices do include the monetary (**Hebrews 13:16**; **2 Corinthians 8:3-4**; **Philippians 4:18**) but are primarily spiritual (**1 Peter 2:5**), consisting of “the fruit of lips” offering our thanks to God (**Hebrews 13:15**) and the good deeds we do as salt and light in our spheres of influence (**Matthew 5:13-14**).

## Story Excerpt

Reading the book of Leviticus may cause us to think that the Old Testament system of sacrifices was as complicated as modern tax codes, not to mention the Old Testament's consideration of the relative value of animal sacrifices (1 Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8).

But as we sift through the requirements of the old covenant, the one element we dare not lose sight of is the requirement for an unblemished sacrificial animal. That requirement describes Jesus, upon whose perfection our salvation depends (1 Peter 1:18-19). That standard must also be ours (Matthew 5:48; 2 Peter 3:14). Is this your priority?—O. P.

# The Smell of Worship

Whatever ugliness we may see or disgust we may feel about the sacrificial system, with all its bloodshed and the continual smell coming from the sacrifices being offered, God saw things differently.

The sacrificial offerings constituted, as our lesson title states, “a sweet aroma.” This is why it is so important to allow him to dictate what kind of worship is acceptable to him.

# The Smell of Worship

In the Old Testament system, the substitutes were the animals or birds. Those substitutes foreshadowed the ultimate Substitute who God in time would provide: Jesus, whose sacrifice at the cross was also a “fragrant offering” (Ephesians 5:2), the once-for-all sacrifice that fulfilled what (and who) the Old Testament sacrifices pointed toward. Indeed, as Paul puts it, our lives are to “spread the aroma of the knowledge of [Christ] everywhere” (2 Corinthians 2:14)

# CLOSING PRAYER

**Our Father, help us to see the meaning of the word offering as more than money. May we demonstrate the commitment and obedience to bring our best before the Lord. Thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus, who gave himself unreservedly to be the sacrifice needed to remove our sins and provide full atonement that we might be reconciled with you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

# Session Summary

Reflections



Closing  
Prayer



# **Bibliography - 1**

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