

A Sacrifice to Celebrate

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Date: 11 June 2023

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- [0 : 00] Can I begin by saying happy King's birthday? It's a long weekend, right? It's the weekend where we celebrate the King's birthday. It's not his actual birthday, of course.
- His actual birthday is in November sometime, I think. But he's going to still have a bit of a party, although in the UK it's next weekend. In Australia it's this weekend. And the party is going to begin with the biggest military parade the UK has every year.
- It's called the Trooping of the Colour. It's very impressive. It starts off with all the military troops assembling at Buckingham Palace. And then they parade down the street. That looks pretty impressive.
- You see the soldiers behind, get a bit of a close-up. Any of your birthdays like that? The closest I've ever gotten for my 21st birthday had a jumping castle.
- That was pretty fun. That was pretty fun. But nothing like this. It's a huge celebration. And like most celebrations, I'm sure it will also involve a time of eating together in fellowship with his family as a celebration of Thanksgiving for his birth.
- [1 : 08] It's his birthday. And so originally the whole point of our long weekend was to give us time, a public holiday to give us time where we could eat together in fellowship as a celebration of Thanksgiving for Charles our King.
- Although now it's just an excuse for a sleep in, isn't it? And our sacrifice in Leviticus tonight is the fellowship offering and it was a sacrifice of celebration.
- It was the party sacrifice, if you like. It was an opportunity for Israel to eat together in fellowship as a celebration of Thanksgiving to the ultimate King, God.
- Let me show you from your Bibles, though I'm going to start with a bit of an overview because the chapter can be broken into three parts, which I've tried to show by a table.
- I've put the table on your outlines so that you can see it a bit more easily. And the three columns represent the three different animals that are used for this particular offering or sacrifice.
- [2 : 17] And the instructions for each animal are generally, not exactly, but generally the same. In other words, it's repeated for those three columns.
- So rather than going through the whole passage and repeating it over and over again, we're just going to look at the first column, verses 1 to 5. And it seems that like all the other sacrifices, this one has a two-fold purpose.
- And the first purpose is to still atone for sin. So point one on your outline and verse one and two in your Bibles, or you can follow on the screen.
- So verse one, if your offering is a fellowship offering, and you are to offer an animal from the herd, whether male or female, you are to present before the Lord an animal without defect.
- You are to lay your hand on the head of your offering and slaughter it at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Then Aaron's sons, the priests, shall splash the blood against the sides of the altar.

- [3 : 18] Here are the first two rows on your table of repeated phrases. And they actually indicate that atonement for sin is being made, even though the word atonement is not there.
- And so first, the animal is acting as a substitute. Because with one exception later on, it has to be without defect. Not just because you were giving part of it to God and you don't give God your defects, do you?
- But also because it was acting as your substitute. Later on in Leviticus, chapter 22, it says on the screen, do not bring anything with a defect because it will not be accepted on your behalf as your substitute for you.
- And so being without defect is a signal that it's acting as your substitute. For being without defect was like being without sin, if you like.
- It's why Jesus had to be without sin to be our substitute. And this substitution idea is also why they then had to lay their hand on the head of the animal to show it was subbing in for them, taking their place.
- [4 : 35] Substitute, right? It's like when I used to play soccer when I was younger and before my two knee surgeries. But when anyone on our team would sub off and we'd sub in, we'd kind of tag each other.
- As though we're subbing in. Well, we are. We were subbing in as their substitute, right? Well, the Israelite putting the hand on the head of the animal is like tagging the animal so that the animal would then substitute in for their place.
- And not to play soccer, of course, but to be slaughtered. To die in their place. And then the priest would splash its blood on the sides of the altar.
- Can you imagine having to slaughter your own animal? Because that's who does it. The person, the Israelite, has to slaughter it. And then the priest splashed the blood on the altar.
- Can you imagine doing that yourself? And then watching the priest splash the blood on the altar? It would be a graphic and vivid reminder that the cost of your sin was the life of another.
- [5 : 41] And that's why at the end of our chapter in verse 17, if you look ahead for a moment, Israel was not to eat any blood.
- No rare steaks, all your steaks had to be well done because blood was sacred. It represented life. Life. And it could only be used for atonement.
- Again, later on in Leviticus in chapter 17 this time, that's what we read. The life of a creature is in the blood. Blood represents life. And God says, I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar.
- It's the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Life of an animal for the life of a human. And so, therefore, none of you may eat blood.
- Blood is sacred. It represents life. The only thing you can use it for is atonement, says God. Because blood pays the penalty of sin.
- [6 : 46] As I said, the animal's life for the human's life. And to purify them from sin so that they could enjoy fellowship with him, with God. Of course, the animal's blood points us to Jesus' blood, as Peter puts it in the New Testament, that we were ransomed.
- That is, the price was paid. That's what ransom means. Bought back. The price was paid for us with the precious blood of Christ.
- And notice, a lamb without blemish or defect. So he could be our substitute. Christ's blood atones for our sin, pays the penalty for it, so that we can go free from eternal judgment for eternal life.

If you're here tonight and you want the guarantee of eternal life, plus fellowship with God now, then you need to trust in Jesus.

You need to believe that his blood paid for your sins so that you could be forgiven and given fellowship with God now. new spiritual eternal life now, with the guarantee of eternal physical life later.

[8 : 07] And if you don't trust in Jesus, then you have to pay for your own sins and remain separated from God, which is what the Bible calls hell. And so it kind of matters, doesn't it, what you choose?

But that's the first purpose of this fellowship offering, to atone for sin. And that was necessary because of the second purpose.

The second purpose was to eat together in fellowship, not just with each other, but with a holy God. And so if you're going to come and enjoy fellowship with a holy God, you had to get your sin atoned for first. But this second purpose is the primary one.

It was a sacrifice to eat together in fellowship as a celebration of Thanksgiving. So point two. And we see this, by the way, that only bits of it were given to God as a food offering, which arose three and four on your table.

Or let me show you from your Bible, verse three to five. He says, from the fellowship offering, you are to bring a food offering to the Lord. So this is the God's food bit, the bit he kind of eats, the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins and the long lobe of the liver, which you will remove with the kidneys.

[9 : 29] Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is lying on the burning wood. It is a food offering, a pleasing, aroma pleasing to the Lord.

Now, I don't know about you, but fat, kidneys, internal organs, it doesn't sound hugely appetizing to me, does it? But we've often been taught to equate, you know, fatty foods with heart disease and so on.

But deep down, we all know that it's actually the most tasty part, right? I mean, think about it, pork crackling, crispy bacon, dare I say KFC, crispy chicken.

I mean, it's deep fried in fat, right? But it is so good. And because God is God, then he gets the most tasty bits. It belongs to him.

It's why at the end of the chapter, at verse 17, they were not to eat, not just any blood, but they weren't to eat any fat either. In fact, at the end of verse 16, it says all the fat is the Lord's.

[10 : 32] There was also a practical reason for this too. In verse 5, this fat was put on top of the daily burnt offering. You might remember from a couple of weeks ago, the burnt offering was the whole animal was given to God and it was burnt on the altar.

It would have taken a while to burn through a whole animal, right? And so putting the fat on top would actually help that previous burnt offering burn. I mean, have you ever done a barbecue and a bit of fat has dripped down onto the flame of the barbecue?

What happens? Fireball, right? Well, that's what's happening here as well. But here's the thing. What happened to the rest of the cow? Or lamb? Or goat?

I mean, there's a whole lot more here than just the fat and internal organs, isn't there? And so I quite like meat myself. And so here's a cow.

And here's all the different cuts you can have beside the fat and internal organs. You know, there's the chuck steak, the brisket, the round, the rump, the ribeye.

[11 : 40] What happened to that? None of that is burnt on the altar. So where does that go? We need to understand that in Leviticus, the first five sacrifices are then repeated later on.

But more briefly, we won't look at that, don't worry. But just so you understand how the book works, in chapters one to five, the focus is on telling the people how to present an offering or a sacrifice to God.

And then in chapters six to seven, the focus is on telling the priests how to handle all the meat that is sacrificed to God. And so when we turn later on to where the fellowship offering is repeated, in chapter seven, we read this, the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons.

That is the priests in general. And then verse 33 of chapter seven, that the particular priest, the son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering on your behalf, well, he has the right thigh as his share.

And so to put it in contemporary terms, all the priests get to share the brisket, I think it is, that's about the breast of the cow. Brisket is what they use in Southern America and they cook it low and slow, you know, Texas style.

[13 : 03] And then the particular priest who offered the sacrifice or the splash of the blood, well, that's the right thigh, that's the round steak. But again, there's still a whole lot left, isn't there?

So what happens to that? Well, again, chapter seven tells us, as for the other meat, anyone ceremonially clean may eat it. This is why the animal had to be pretty big size.

With bird offerings, poorer people could offer a bird, but a quail does not go very far amongst a big family, does it? And so the fellowship offering, there was no bird option.

It had to be a bigger animal, a cat, a cow or a sheep or a goat. But the point is, this sacrifice was to be eaten together with God as the honored guest.

And so God got the luxurious fat bits, the priests got the breast and the thigh and the people got the rest. It was a meal eaten together in fellowship with one another.

[14 : 05] That's why it's often called the fellowship offering, right? But it wasn't just having dinner together. It was actually for a special occasion. It was to eat together to celebrate something good that God had given them.

An opportunity to celebrate and give thanks to God for something good or some blessing they've received. The Hebrew word for peace. Does anyone know what the Hebrew word for peace is?

It's shalom. Yep. Okay. Some people sign their emails with it. Shalom. But that means more than just peace from war.

Okay. It actually means the good life. The peaceful life. All the good things we might enjoy. Which is why, as Victor said at the start of the service, this fellowship offering in some Bibles is translated peace offering.

Because it wasn't just about eating together in fellowship. It was also about celebrating with thanksgiving some sort of shalom, some peace, some good thing that God had given them.

[15 : 20] We see this as well in chapter 7. If you've got your Bibles there, you can turn to chapter 7, verse 11. Although I'll put it on the screen for those online as well.

So you can see this is where the fellowship offering is repeated. It's got a heading there in your Bibles. And from verse 11, notice how often the idea of thanksgiving comes up.

He says, these are the regulations for the fellowship offering anyone may present to the Lord. So he's talking to the priests particularly here. If they offer it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering, they are to offer thick loaves made without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, thin loaves made without yeast and brushed with oil and thick loaves of the finest flour well kneaded and with olive oil mixed in.

Along with their fellowship offering of thanksgiving, they are to present an offering with thick loaves of bread made with yeast. They are to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the Lord which then belongs to his priest, in particular, the one who splashes the blood of the fellowship offering against the altar.

The meat of their fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered. They must leave none of it until morning. Do you notice how often the word thanksgiving comes up, that idea?

[16 : 43] In fact, this first type of fellowship offering is twice called a fellowship offering of thanksgiving. Again, the point is it wasn't just about eating together with God, it was about eating together with God in thanksgiving for some sort of shalom, some sort of blessing that they'd received in life.

Whether an answered prayer, a good doctor's report, a good uni exam result, or whatever it was. We see this elsewhere in the Bible like Psalm 107 for example, where they cried out to God in prayer and he saved them.

And so, what does the psalmist tell them to do? To give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and verse 22, to sacrifice thank offerings. That's the fellowship offering.

To come to the temple or the tabernacle and to sacrifice it to atone for their sin and then enjoy in celebration together for this good thing that God has given them.

Which is why this offering was also to come with bread. And not just for themselves but for the priests so everyone could have like a steak sandwich if you like. Everyone could enjoy.

[18 : 03] But I don't know if you noticed it at the end there. It said right at the end of verse 15 that they had to eat all the meat in one day. Can you imagine eating a whole cow in one day?

That's a lot of meat, right? And effectively forced them to eat with others to help didn't it? It kind of emphasised the fellowship idea. But meat back then just like it's becoming today is a real luxury.

It was really expensive. I went to the butchers at Jackson Court the other day who's not the cheapest butcher in the world and I thought I wonder how much the ribeye steak is. \$98 a kilo.

I didn't get any. But they had to eat it all in one day. It kind of forced them to celebrate to enjoy this luxury to emphasise the celebration and thanksgiving idea.

We see this later on in Deuteronomy for example where they had to bring their offerings and sacrifices like the fellowship offerings to the place God nominates. Originally it was Shiloh and then when the temple was built it was Jerusalem.

[19 : 14] And notice and there rejoice before the Lord your God and not just you but your sons and daughters your male and female servants and the priests the Levites rejoice together as a celebration of thanksgiving to God for the good thing he's given.

There are two other types of fellowship offerings in chapter 7 verse 16 and 17 both of which still carry the idea of thanksgiving but we don't have time to unpack them now. Instead what does this all mean for us?

Well Christ has replaced the temple and so we don't have to go over to Jerusalem I mean the temple's not really there anymore anyway and we've already seen that Christ's blood is what atones for our sin and so we are always able to be in fellowship with God aren't we?

We don't have to go to the temple we've always had our sins atoned for and in fact we've been given God's spirit and so we're always in fellowship with God but what about the eating together in fellowship with each other as a celebration of thanksgiving to God well one way we can do that is the Lord's Supper for here we eat together in fellowship as a celebration of thanksgiving for Christ don't we?

in fact in our second reading from 1 Corinthians we heard how it was originally a whole meal though they were not waiting for others and some of them were getting drunk it was the wrong type of party meal but rather the Lord's Supper for us is a chance to eat together yes it's only a small bit of juice and wafer but to eat together in fellowship with Christ and with God as a celebration of thanksgiving for what Christ has done for us it's why during the Lord's Supper we often have this line you know lift up your hearts we lift them to Christ the Lord let us give thanks to God and it is right to give our thanks and praise that's one way we can fulfill this fellowship offering idea this special moment giving thanks to God for Christ a second way we can do it is by gathering together in fellowship on special occasions to celebrate the good things God has given us it's interesting that in the parable of the prodigal son the father says to kill the fattened calf do you remember that

[21 : 46] I'm sure you've glossed over that I've glossed over that hundreds of times until I was looking at this and realized that's the fellowship offering it's a time for celebration and it's a special occasion what's the special occasion well his son who was lost is now found of course after Christ the early church I would do it by eating together with glad and sincere hearts praising or thanking God and what's the special occasion here well that the Lord added to their number daily people were becoming Christians every single day those who have been saved and so a few weeks ago to give a modern example my daughter went to her friends baptism and afterwards they ate together as a celebration it wasn't a cow or a lamb it was pizza but here is a fellowship offering if you like eating together in fellowship with her friends as a celebration of thanksgiving to

God for this person who was baptized who stood up and declared that they wanted to follow Christ well last year we had a couple celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary and so we had a little service on a Saturday with food and family and friends afterwards that's like our fellowship offering where we join together to enjoy fellowship and food but with thanksgiving to God for their 60 years of marriage at special occasions like good uni results birthdays weddings graduations the birth of a child a new job a baptism or confirmation or even the gift of a long weekend we can gather together to eat in fellowship with each other and with God and to give thanks for the shalom the good thing we've been doing from his hand now I suspect we're pretty good at gathering although COVID has knocked that on the head a little bit and we're very good at eating aren't we but do we remember the thanking do we remember that God is with us as the honoured guest the one who gave us this thing that we're celebrating and so remember to thank him for it and so as you gather for food and fellowship to celebrate a special event let's not forget to give thanks to God and I mean more than just say grace before you eat

I mean making time for a couple people to say heartfelt prayers of thanksgiving to God for this good thing you're enjoying for the fellowship offering was a celebration of thanksgiving and so to help you I was wanting to really buy you all a lamb slovak or a steak sandwich which was in keeping of Leviticus 3 tonight but I did the sums it was going to cost me over a grand and while I love you most of you I know like going out for dinner anyway and so instead we're going to finish with a cut down version of communion where we celebrate Christ's death followed by eating together and I've bought everyone a drumstick or cyclone if you don't like drumsticks and while we eat together I want you to share a couple of things that you're thankful to God for whether it's some good thing he's given you or an aspect of his character that encourages you and let's turn it into a celebration of thanksgiving and so with that in mind lift up your hearts let us give thanks to God the father you are worthy our Lord and

God to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they were created and have there been sorry yes you're supposed to join in but that's all right but we especially praise you for our heavenly praise you our heavenly father for your son our savior Jesus Christ who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true and complete sacrifice for sin and obtain an eternal deliverance for us his people and so we say together to Jesus Christ who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood be glory and dominion forever and ever amen well if those who are assisting would like to come forward now and as they come forward the way we're going to do this to emphasize the fellowship idea we're going to actually stay in our seats and we're going to eat all together and so the assistants are going to come and hand out a piece of wafer or rice cracker or whatever we got and if you can hold on to it and then we'll eat it together and then we'll do the same with the cup and then we'll eat some drumsticks and cyclones afterwards explifice it kids please save ■■■ings■ ■■■■■ déc survives