

**Approaching God Through Sacrificial Offerings (Lev. 1-6:7)**

**I. Setting the Stage for the Sacrificial System**

In the beginning, humanity was to dwell with God in righteousness and holiness. Because of sin, humanity was cast out from God’s presence. How can humanity return to dwell with God? It is not something humanity can do; God must make the way. This problem is illustrated in a new way at the end of Exodus. God has called a people to Himself and descended to dwell in the tabernacle, but no one is able to enter to meet with Him. This must be fixed by making the people, the priesthood, and the tabernacle holy. Therefore, God introduces the legislation by which He will make them holy and able to approach Him. He first does this by giving instructions on the various offerings that He requires of the people in **Leviticus 1-6:7**. The Hebrew word for offering in these chapters means “to draw near,” they are the means God has given for His people to draw near to Him. They move people within the categories of the holy, clean, and unclean.

**II. Explaining the Categories of Holiness**

Category	Humanity	Animals/Birds	Space
<i>Holy</i>	Priests	Sacrificial	Tabernacle
<i>Clean</i>	Israel	Clean	Camp
<i>Unclean</i>	Gentiles	Unclean	Wilderness



Only that which is **holy** may be in the presence of God. All that isn’t **holy** is **common**. **Common** things consist of two groups, the **clean** and the **unclean**. Some **unclean** things can be **cleansed** and made **clean**. **Clean** things become **holy** when they are **sanctified**, but **unclean** objects can’t be **sanctified**. **Clean** things can be made **unclean** if they are **polluted**. **Holy** items may be **profaned** and become **common**, even **polluted**, and therefore **unclean**. **Sacrificial** rites are what God appointed to move towards **holiness**. **Sin** or **infirmity** are what moves towards **uncleanness**.

**Order of offerings: Sin and/or Guilt → Burnt and Grain → Peace (Lev. 9)**

**I. Sin and Guilt Offerings (Lev. 4-6:7)**

- A. **Purpose:** Ceremonially to **cleanse** the offeror of sins
- B. **Emphasis:** The blood rite, highlighting the need for the giving of an innocent life in place of the offeror.

<b>Elements of a sacrifice:</b>
1. The presentation rite
2. The hand-laying rite
3. The slaughtering rite
4. The blood rite
5. The burning rite
6. The communion rite

**II. Burnt and Grain Offerings (Lev. 1-2)**

- A. **Purpose:** Ceremonially to **sanctify** the offeror to serve God
- B. **Emphasis:** The burning rite, which was the complete burning or consumption of the animal offered which goes up in smoke as an aroma to God, highlighting the need to give oneself completely to God.

**III. Peace Offering (Lev. 3)**

- A. **Purpose:** Ceremonially to fellowship with God
- B. **Emphasis:** The communion rite, in which the offeror ate with God in His presence, highlighting the peace between the offeror and God and that the offeror has been brought near to God.

### **Ceremonial/Sacramental Picture vs. Spiritual Reality of Holiness**

- I. *Relating the Ceremonial to the Spiritual.*** The ceremonial aspects of the law represent the spiritual truths of our standing before God. The ceremonies do not cause the spiritual to be true (this is the Roman Catholic error) but are a picture to see and understand those realities and are a means for the Spirit to work the spiritual realities in those who have faith. One can be ceremonially holy or unclean without being so spiritually and vice versa (e.g., **Psalm 40:6-8; 51:14-19; 15:1-5; 24:3-6**).
- II. *Intentionality Required for Holiness.*** The ceremonial system illustrates many points, but one of the main ones is that you can't be clean or holy by accident. The normal course of living as a sinner in this fallen world can make you unclean, but no one can be clean or holy without intentionally seeking to be so. Further, while things can be clean naturally, only God, by the processes He has ordained, can make a thing or person holy.
- III. *Holiness Centered on Christ.*** The goal of sacramental holiness is to train us to be morally pure in our lives and worship. This true holiness centers on our union with Christ. Christ, the holy one, is renewing us to dwell with Him in the new creation, which will be perfectly holy in every respect.

### **The Sacraments**

- I. *Baptism.*** Ceremonially represents that those baptized have been truly set apart and called by God to belong to Him. We are washed in the water to represent the cleansing of the new birth (**John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22**). Baptism pictures our transference from the realm of the unclean (the world) to the clean (the visible church).
- II. *Lord's Supper.*** Ceremonially represents that believers have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and are being sanctified to walk with Christ so that He may sustain them as the true bread of life. This all looks forward to seeing Christ again in His glorified flesh in the holiness of the new creation.

### **Redemption Related to Sacramental Holiness and the Offerings**

- I. *Justification***
  - A. *What God Does:*** Through faith, He cleanses us from the guilt of our sins and gives us Christ's righteousness (WSC 33).<sup>1</sup>
  - B. *Relation to the sacrifices.*** This is like the sin and guilt offerings in that we go from a status of being sinful and unclean to being forgiven and clean by the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God.
- II. *Sanctification***
  - A. *What God Does:*** God renews us more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness (WSC 35).
  - B. *Relation to the sacrifices.*** This is like the burnt and grain offerings in that we, having already been cleansed and forgiven, endeavor, by the power of God, to live our whole lives for Him according to His will.
- III. *Glorification***
  - A. *What God Does:*** God fully frees us from sin, fully renews our bodies and souls after the image of Christ and brings us near to dwell in His presence forever (WSC 37-38).
  - B. *Relation to the sacrifices.*** This is like the peace offering in that we have been cleansed and made holy by the sacrifice of Christ and the work of God in our lives so that God then enables us to fellowship with Him in the perfect blessedness that He has promised.

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<sup>1</sup> WSC stands for Westminster Shorter Catechism

**How the Levitical System Relates to the Covenant and God’s Grace**

We need to recognize the priority of grace in the Mosaic Covenant when we speak about holiness. The holiness system of the tabernacle **is not designed to save**, it is for a people for whom God **has already accomplished salvation**. He has already called them to be in covenant with Him and brought them into the state of being His holy, precious possession apart from the rest of the world. The people cannot become any more or less redeemed from Egypt than they already are; God has fully accomplished that aspect. What is left is for them now to live the whole of their lives by faith before the face of God rather than as slaves to sin. The Levitical system is designed to teach and guide them in this process of living before God’s face and growing in sanctification.

<b>God’s Principle Saving Act</b>	<b>Living in the Covenant</b>
I. Historical Picture: Exodus from Egypt II. Fulfillment in Christ: Passive Obedience III. Fulfillment in the Christian Life: Conversion	I. Historical Picture: Levitical System II. Fulfillment in Christ: Active Obedience III. Fulfillment in the Christian Life: Progressive Sanctification

***God’s Principle Saving Act: Pictured by the Exodus***

- I. Christ fulfills the act of salvation that brings us into the covenant by taking the punishment and providing the sacrifice necessary to forgive our sin. This is called His passive obedience.
- II. This salvation is fulfilled in our lives by the Holy Spirit applying the work of Christ to us:
  - A. Regeneration
  - B. Union with Christ
    - 1. Justification: The active and passive obedience of Christ is imputed to us and our sin to Christ
    - 2. Adoption
    - 3. Definitive Sanctification: Breaking of the reign and power of sin (**Heb. 10:10; Rom. 6**)

***Living in the Covenant: Pictured by the Levitical System***

- I. Christ fulfills the need to live a holy life before God by living the life of perfect obedience we are called to live, so that we are not only forgiven for breaking the covenant by His passive obedience but are accounted as having fully kept the covenant. This is called His active obedience.<sup>2</sup>
- II. Living in the covenant is fulfilled in our lives as the Spirit works progressive sanctification in us. Progressive sanctification is our growing in holiness as we live by faith before God. We grow in holiness by being conformed more and more to the image of Christ, in which we die more and more to sin and live more and more unto righteousness.
- III. The Levitical system helps communicate to us that our sin and the pollution of the world are antithetical to living before the face of God and while we tolerate that corruption in our lives, we are not fit for the full communion God would have with us. However, there is always the means of repentance and cleansing whereby we can be restored to communion with God.

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<sup>2</sup> Key note: This does not mean that the active obedience of Christ comes to us in our progressive sanctification. His active obedience is imputed in our justification, see above.