



Leviticus 3:1-17

Peace Offerings

The Peace Offering or *zebach* is also called the "fellowship offering." It is literally a "sacrifice of happiness."

It consisted of an ox, lamb or goat, male or female. The priest sprinkled the blood on the altar, while the liver, kidneys and fat were burned on the altar. God claimed the richest part of the animal. The priest was given the breast and right thigh. The worshiper was to eat what remained. It is the only sacrifice, which the worshiper shared by eating a portion of the sacrifice (7:15).

The peace offering was symbolic of the peace that already existed between the worshiper and Yahweh because of the atonement. Therefore, it was time to celebrate. It was never offered to obtain peace, but as a celebration of its existence. It is a picture of the fellowship between God and the believing sinner based on the blood sacrifices. This offering pictures the blessings and powers which salvation has secured in the death of Christ. It is a thanksgiving praise offering.

Christ is our peace. "Now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Ephesians 2:13-14). Sin has separated man from a thrice holy God, and only the sacrifice of Christ on the cross can reconcile us to God. It takes Christ's atonement to remove the barrier. The blood of Jesus Christ has brought us near who were far off because of our sin and unbelief. The word for "peace" that Paul uses is *eiro* and means to join together. The blood of Jesus has brought together that which was separated by sin and enmity. This peace is dependent upon Christ alone.

We sinners are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Romans 2:24-25). Each person who believes on Christ is justified. He is declared righteous, not made righteous. It is a judicial act whereby God justifies those who believe on Christ as a free gift. It is out of His grace, based upon Christ's death, that God declares us righteous. God could not declare anyone righteous without having a solid basis for doing it. God can make that declaration because of the propitiation in the blood of Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 9:5 the word for propitiation is used of the Mercy Seat, or the place of atonement on top of the Ark of the Covenant. The penalty for our sins has been paid in full by the death of Jesus. On that basis, God can declare us justified. Therefore, Christ is our peace. He has made peace for us through His death. We can now celebrate with thanksgiving for His bountiful blessing.

"For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth

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through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:19-20). In this full statement of the Deity of Jesus Christ Paul says God has reconciled people to Himself through Christ. Christ was equal to the task because of His deity. His blood satisfied the just demands of the law that sinful man had broken. By His death our Lord Jesus bound together again a holy God and sinful man. By God's grace and reconciling power, our attitude toward God has changed.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). God removed our enmity and changed our hearts. God took the initiative to reconcile us to Himself. God did not need to be reconciled. He is not the problem. We sinners have the problem, and God reached down through His son Jesus Christ to bring us to Himself. He did this by turning away His own holy wrath toward sin and making it possible for us to come into His presence by means of the blood of Jesus.

The apostle John opened his first epistle telling us, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ . . . if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:3, 7).

A. T. Robertson observed, "Walking in the light with God makes possible fellowship with one another and is made possible also by the blood of Jesus (real blood and no mere phantom, atoning blood of the sinless Son of God for our sins). John is not ashamed to use this word. It is not the mere "example" of Jesus that "cleanses" us from sin. It does cleanse the conscience and life and nothing else does (Heb. 9:13; Tit. 2:14) (*Word Pictures*, 1 John 1:7)."

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Is this not what the writer of Hebrews has in mind as he concludes his book with these words? "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

The person who has been justified by faith in Jesus Christ breaks forth spontaneously in praise to God. We enjoy fellowship and peace with God and our fellowman because of the peace that has been established through the perfect sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. These peace offerings were always preceded by the daily burnt offering in the Tabernacle and Temple worship. Therefore, it was a thanksgiving offering for salvation completed. It was a time of joyful celebration and thanksgiving for God's blessings of fellowship.

What better way to close than with one of Paul's doxologies?

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

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