

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have the law concerning the meat offering.

- I. The matter of it; whether of raw flour with oil and incense (#Le 2:1), or baked in the oven (#Le 2:4), or upon a plate (#Le 2:5-6), or in a frying pan, #Le 2:7.
- II. The management of it, of the flour (#Le 2:2-3), of the cakes, #Le 2:8-10.
- III. Some particular rules concerning it, That leaven and honey must never be admitted (#Le 2:11-12), and salt never omitted in the meat-offering, #Le 2:13.
- IV. The law concerning the offering of firstfruits in the ear, #Le 2:14.

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 10.

There were some meat-offerings that were only appendices to the burnt-offerings, as that which was offered with the daily sacrifice (#Ex 29:38-39) and with the peace-offerings; these had drink-offerings joined with them (see #Nu 15:4,7,9-10), and in these the quantity was appointed. But the law of this chapter concerns those meat offerings that were offered by themselves, whenever a man saw cause thus to express his devotion. The first offering we read of in scripture was of this kind (#Ge 4:3): *Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering.*

I. This sort of offerings was appointed,

1. In condescension to the poor, and their ability, that those who themselves lived only upon bread and cakes might offer an acceptable offering to God out of that which was their own coarse and homely fare, and by making for God's altar, as the widow of Sarepta for his prophet, a little cake first, might procure such a blessing upon the handful of meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse, as that it should not fail.
2. As a proper acknowledgment of the mercy of God to them in their food. This was like a quitrent, by which they testified their dependence upon God, their thankfulness to him, and their expectations from him as their owner and bountiful benefactor, who giveth to all life, and breath, and food convenient. Thus must they honour the Lord with their substance, and, in token of their eating and drinking to his glory, must consecrate some of their meat and drink to his immediate service. Those that now, with a grateful charitable heart, deal out their bread to the hungry, and provide for the necessities of those that are destitute of daily food, and when they eat the fat and drink the sweet themselves send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, offer unto God an acceptable meat-offering. The prophet laments it as one of the direful effects of famine that thereby the *meat-offering and drink-offering were cut off from the house of the Lord* (#Joe 1:9), and reckoned it the greatest blessing of plenty that it would be the revival of them, #Joe 2:14.

II. The laws of the meat-offerings were these:--

1. The ingredients must always be fine flour and oil, two staple commodities of the land of Canaan, #De 8:8. Oil was to them then in their food what butter is now to us. If it was undressed, the oil must be poured upon the flour (#Le 2:1); if cooked, it must be mingled with the flour, #Le 2:4, &c.
2. If it was flour unbaked, besides the oil it must have frankincense put upon it, which

was to be burnt with it (#Le 2:1-2), for the perfuming of the altar; in allusion to this, gospel ministers are said to be *a sweet savour unto God*, #2Co 2:15.

3. If it was prepared, this might be done in various ways; the offerer might bake it, or fry it, or mix the flour and oil upon a plate, for the doing of which conveniences were provided about the tabernacle. The law was very exact even about those offerings that were least costly, to intimate the cognizance God takes of the religious services performed with a devout mind, even by the poor of his people.
4. It was to be presented by the offerer to the priest, which is called *bringing it to the Lord* (#Le 2:8), for the priests were God's receivers, and were ordained to offer gifts.
5. Part of it was to be burnt upon the altar, for a memorial, that is, in token of their mindfulness of God's bounty to them, in giving them all things richly to enjoy. It was *an offering made by fire*, #Le 2:2,9. The consuming of it by fire might remind them that they deserved to have all the fruits of the earth thus burnt up, and that it was of the Lord's mercies that they were not. They might also learn that as *meats are for the belly, and the belly for meats, so God shall destroy both it and them* (#1Co 6:13), and that *man lives not by bread alone*. This offering made by fire is here said to be *of a sweet savour unto the Lord*; and so are our spiritual offerings, which are made by the fire of holy love, particularly that of alms giving, which is said to be *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God* (#Php 4:18), and *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, #Heb 13:16.
6. The remainder of the meat offering was to be given to the priests, #Le 2:3,10. *It is a thing most holy*, not to be eaten by the offerers, as the peace-offerings (which, though holy, were not most holy), but by the priests only, and their families. Thus God provided that those who served at the altar should live upon the altar, and live comfortably.

Ver. 11.

Here,

I. Leaven and honey are forbidden to be put in any of their meat-offerings: *No leaven, nor any honey, in any offering made by fire*, #Le 2:11.

1. The leaven was forbidden in remembrance of the unleavened bread they ate when they came out of Egypt. So much despatch was required in the offerings they made that it was not convenient they should stay for the leavening of them. The New Testament comparing pride and hypocrisy to leaven because they swell like leaven, comparing also malice and wickedness to leaven because they sour like leaven, we are to understand and improve this as a caution to take heed of those sins which will certainly spoil the acceptableness of our spiritual sacrifices. Pure hands must be lifted up without wrath, and all our gospel feasts kept with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
2. Honey was forbidden, though Canaan flowed with it, because *to eat much honey is not good* (#Pr 25:16,27); it turns to choler and bitterness in the stomach, though luscious to the taste. Some think the chief reason why those two things, leaven and honey, were forbidden, was because the Gentiles used them very much in their sacrifices, and God's people must not learn or use the way of the heathen, but his services must be the reverse of their idolatrous services; #De 12:30-31. Some make this application of this double prohibition: leaven signifies grief and sadness of spirit

(#Ps 73:21), *My heart was leavened*; honey signifies sensual pleasure and mirth. In our service of God both these must be avoided, and a mean observed between those extremes; for the sorrow of the world worketh death, and a love to the delights of sense is a great enemy to holy love.

II. Salt is required in all their offerings, #Le 2:13. The altar was the table of the Lord; and therefore, salt being always set on our tables, God would have it always used at his. It is called the *salt of the covenant*, because, as men confirmed their covenants with each other by eating and drinking together, at all which collations salt was used, so God, by accepting his people's gifts and feasting them upon his sacrifices, supping with them and they with him (#Re 3:20), did confirm his covenant with them. Among the ancients salt was a symbol of friendship. The salt for the sacrifice was not brought by the offerers, but was provided at the public charge, as the wood was, #Ezr 7:20-22. And there was a chamber in the court of the temple called *the chamber of salt*, in which they laid it up. *Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?* God would hereby intimate to them that their sacrifices in themselves were unsavoury. The saints, who are living sacrifices to God, must have salt in themselves, for *every sacrifice must be salted with salt* (#Mr 9:49-50), and our speech must be *always with grace* (#Col 4:6), so must all our religious performances be seasoned with that salt. Christianity is the salt of the earth.

III. Directions are given about the first-fruits.

1. The oblation of their first-fruits at harvest, of which we read, #De 26:2. These were offered to the Lord, not to be burnt upon the altar, but to be given to the priests as perquisites of their office, #Le 2:12. And *you shall offer them* (that is, leaven and honey) in the oblation of the first-fruits, though they were forbidden in other meat-offerings; for they were proper enough to be eaten by the priests, though not to be burnt upon the altar. The loaves of the first-fruits are particularly ordered to be *baked with leaven*, #Le 23:17. And we read of the first-fruits of honey brought to the house of God, #2Ch 31:5.
2. A meat-offering of their first-fruits. The former was required by the law; this was a free-will offering, #Le 2:14-16. If a man, with a thankful sense of God's goodness to him in giving him hopes of a plentiful crop, was disposed to bring an offering in kind immediately out of his field, and present it to God, owning thereby his dependence upon God and obligations to him,

(1.) Let him be sure to bring the first ripe and full ears, not such as were small and half-withered. Whatever was brought for an offering to God must be the best in its kind, though it were but green ears of corn. We mock God, and deceive ourselves, if we think to put him off with a corrupt thing while we have in our flock a male, #Mal 1:14.

(2.) These green ears must be dried by the fire, that the corn, such as it was, might be beaten out of them. That is not expected from green ears which one may justly look for from those that have been left to grow fully ripe. If those that are young do God's work as well as they can, they shall be accepted, though they cannot do it so well as those that are aged and experienced. God makes the best of green ears of corn, and so must we.

(3.) Oil and frankincense must be put upon it. Thus (as some allude to this) wisdom and humility must soften and sweeten the spirits and services of young people, and then their green ears of corn shall be acceptable. God takes a particular delight in the first ripe fruits of the Spirit and the expressions of early piety and devotion. Those that can but think and speak as children, yet, if they think and speak well, God will be well pleased with their buds and blossoms, and will never forget the kindness of their youth.

(4.) It must be used as other meat-offerings, **#Le 2:16**, compare **#Le 2:9**. He shall *offer all the frankincense; it is an offering made by fire*. The fire and the frankincense seem to have had a special significance.

[1.] The fire denotes the fervency of spirit which ought to be in all our religious services. In every good thing we must be zealously affected. Holy love to God is the fire by which all our offerings must be made; else they are not of a sweet savour to God.

[2.] The frankincense denotes the mediation and intercession of Christ, by which all our services are perfumed and recommended to God's gracious acceptance. Blessed be God that we have the substance of which all these observances were but shadows, the fruit that was hid under these leaves.