

# Walking Through the Veil III: Consumed, Cleansed and Connected

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*Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.' " – Hebrews 10:1-10 (5-7 printed)*

## The Day Trip

Giving an offering in the days of Jesus was not like it is now. In today's economy, offerings are convenient, to the point that we don't have to give much thought to it. Offerings are also relegated to "church upkeep and ministries", so we "give" for the sake of maintaining the operation of the church. While this was in fact a part of offering, it was by no means the main function or reason for offering.

For many, offerings were far from convenient. People had to come from great distances to bring their offerings, and there was preparation that had to happen before the trip ever happened.

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household... The animals you choose must be year old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. – Exodus 12:1-3,5-6*

For Israel, the offering needed to not only have certain requirements met, but it also had to be "separated and cared for". From the 10<sup>th</sup> day to the 14<sup>th</sup> day, the animal was to be brought close to the family, cared for and inspected. *There was an intimate relationship between the person offering and the animal they were offering.*

*Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written" he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." – Matthew 21:12-13*

Jesus took issue with those that tainted the intimacy of the offering, by selling "pre-examined, pre-approved" animals for sacrifice. Those selling made it possible for people to have little investment in the offering, and to just give what was required, but not have any connection to the act itself.

*Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When*

*the young man heard this, we went away sad, because he had great wealth. – Matthew 19:21-22*

Jesus had an encounter with a man looking to obtain eternal life. When confronted with the life that he was to live, he was quick to say that he had been doing that since he was a child (inferring that this was a ready habit, no personal connection was made – also, that he did not get any sense of connection to God and the life he offered through the practice he was keeping). *What else is there? What am I missing?* Jesus told him to touch the thing that he was most intimately connected with, offering that, effectively as a burnt offering to the Lord.

*David said to him, “Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price.” Araunah said to David, “Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this.” But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.” – I Chronicles 21:22-24*

David had sinned before the Lord, and as a result, a plague began to move through Israel. As David cried out to the Lord, he was instructed to build an altar on the threshing floor of a member of his kingdom. Araunah was more than happy to assist David by giving him everything that he needed, but David knew something about offering that Araunah didn't think about: **an offering is not an offering if there is not an intimate connection with it.** For David, he could have ordered the land taken, or simply received it from Araunah, but if he had, it would have had no value to him. Especially in light of the reason for the offering, David had to display full commitment to the task – it cost him to give the offering.

### The Significance of Offerings

There were a number of offerings that were brought to the altar in the courtyard of the tabernacle:

- Burnt offering
- Peace offering
- Drink offering
- Sin offering
- Meat/grain offering

Each of the offerings had special significance, and pointed to an aspect of life that God would address in the redemption that would come through Jesus.

Offering	Symbolic of	Scripture References
<b>Sin</b>	Jesus taking on our sins, replacing us and wiping them away	God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God – II Corinthians 5:21

Offering	Symbolic of	Scripture References
<b>Grain</b>	Worship for God's goodness and provision	This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever. – John 6:58
<b>Drink</b>	Many times combined with the grain offering, often described as joy	In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you. – Luke 22:20
<b>Peace</b>	Reconciliation and restoration of relationship	For He himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations – Ephesians 2:14-15
<b>Burnt Offering</b>	Full and complete surrender to God	Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done

While each of the offerings were accepted by God they were only as effective as the one giving the offering:

*The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. – Hebrews 10:1-2*

Endless, year after year, offering after offering... think of the level of commitment by those bringing their offering. The cost for each person, each family. The cost of livestock, food, time, and even intimate connection. Doing it once is costly and inconvenient, yet having to do it over and over again requires so much more. It requires a lifestyle of dedication:

*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or seventy times seven) – Matthew 18:21-22*

God required Israel to have a lifestyle of offering and sacrifice, but not because God was interested in constant sacrifice – in fact, God was not interested in the actual sacrifices themselves:

*Therefore when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. With burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – **I have come to do your will, O God.**" – Hebrews 10:5-7*

The sacrifices pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. Furthermore, seeing the cost, commitment and intimacy that people would go through for sacrifices that were temporary, *if God's sacrifice is that much more, that can actually take away sins, how much is his commitment and dedication to us?*

### The Laver

*Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the Lord by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. – Exodus 30:18-21a*

Of all the elements specified for the tabernacle, the laver stands out for one reason: it is the only item that was not given specific measurements by God. Every other item not only had the material and exact construction specified, but the instructions were given down to the smallest measurement. Some reason can be seen in 1) its placement in the courtyard, and the activities associated with it.

### Like Looking in a Mirror

The laver was to be used by the priests only to wash before performing their duties. The laver itself was made of polished bronze

*They made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting – Exodus 38:8*

These mirrors were combined to make a polished face that the priests would have to look at every time they came to wash. Washing was therefore more than symbolic: it was reflective. Whenever the priest went before the Lord, he had to 1) look at himself, and 2) wash the areas that were in contact with the world. Not only this, he would have to do the same when he was in a position to usher others before the Lord through burnt offerings.

Being clean before the Lord makes sense to us, there was more than just ritual cleansing:

*The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do you realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me... Jesus answered, "A person who*

*has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” – John 13:2-8,10*

Coming to the tabernacle to present ourselves before the Lord, we would expect to pursue constant cleansing. Jesus connected this cleansing with something deeper than just purification. He associated it with relationship. Looking into the laver, recognizing our humanity in the presence of a Holy God any approach to God would have to be with reverence.

The priest also had to deal with the people – those that came to offer for their own sins, to sacrifice for thanksgiving or surrender or whatever, and before the priest could deal with the people, he had to deal with his own self:

*Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, **since he himself is subject to weakness**. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people. – Hebrews 5:1-3*

The priest was constantly facing his own humanity in approaching God and in approaching others. Facing his own humanity made him able to accept and perform the sacrifice, for he could identify with the people who were bringing the sacrifice:

*Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison **as if you were their fellow prisoners**, and those who are mistreated **as if you yourselves were suffering**. – Hebrews 13:1-3*

The priest did not clean at the laver to give him an advantage or better status. He did it to assist those who were approaching God.