

Leviticus 2 — Grain Offering

November 29, 2015

Welcome to CrossWinds Church. I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. If you are like me you are still recovering from the turkey, stuffing and gravy. For our family, it was a good day of thanksgiving. A heart of thankfulness is an appropriate way to lead into our message this morning.

If you are new, it is great to have you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. Last week at both of our campuses, in preparation for Christmas, we began a mini-series called Christmas from the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus is an Old Testament book that most Christians ignore because it feels like an obscure collection of rules and regulations for Old Testament worship. The book isn't as obscure as it may appear. The first seven chapters of Leviticus teach about five offerings Israel was to use in its worship. Each of these offerings dealt with a facet of ancient Israel's relationship with God. Each of the offerings also points to Jesus and a reason why he came. This season we are studying the five offerings in the beginning of Leviticus to learn more about Jesus and his coming.

Last week we looked at the first offering. It is called the burnt offering. Sometimes it is called the whole burnt offering. When Israelites wanted to make a personal commitment to God and take ownership of their relationships with God, they took either a bull, sheep, goat or bird and brought it to the tabernacle. There they confessed their sinfulness to God with their hands on the head on the animals so they identified with the animals. Then they killed the animals. The

animals figuratively died in their places for their sins. The priest collected some of the blood from the dying animal and splashed it on the sides of the altar. The blood of the animal figuratively and temporarily covered a person's sin to restore his or her relationship with God. The entire animal was then burned on the altar as a way of expressing the complete dedication of his or her life to God.

The burnt offering in the Old Testament was a way people asked God to cover their sin by the death of a substitute as they dedicated their lives to God. This first offering pointed forward to Jesus who came to die in our places for our sin. The difference is Jesus' death didn't just temporarily cover some of our sin. His death paid for all of our sin. The burnt offering needed to be repeated frequently and was offered multiple times a day because it was temporary in nature. Jesus' death that paid for all of our sin is permanent and never needs to be repeated.

Those in the Old Testament that gave their lives to God and asked God to cover their sin through the sacrifice of the burnt offering were looking forward by faith to Jesus, the one true burnt offering that was yet to come. Today, those who dedicate their lives to God look back on the death of Christ as the one true burnt offering that came and paid for our sin. Jesus is the center point of all history. The Old Testament saints looked forward to him in the burnt offering sacrifice, we look back upon him by faith as the one all burnt offerings foreshadowed.

Today we move to Leviticus 2 to examine the grain offering.

What was the purpose of the grain offering?

When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it... Leviticus 2:1 (ESV)

The word for offering in Hebrew is the word *minchah*. In 2 Samuel 8:2,6 it is used of the Moabites and Arabians paying tribute to King David because they recognized he was lord over them. *Minchah* is paying tribute or giving a gift as a way of recognizing someone's rulership over your life. This was not a bad thing. When Leviticus 2 talks about giving a grain offering to God it is the way you were to express your thankfulness to God for your acceptance. It was a way of thanking God for providing your daily needs. You took some of your grain, and out of a heart of gratitude to God for providing your food and your daily needs, you gave him a portion.

While the burnt offering was a way to dedicate your life to God and have your sin covered, the grain offering was the way you thanked God for accepting you, sustaining your life and providing for your daily needs. You dedicated part of your food, part of your harvest, to God as an act of worship and thankfulness to him.

This is what we do in church today. The offering plate is passed. Why do we pass the plate in worship? Giving a portion of what God supplies for our daily needs back to God is a way we worship God and thank God for providing for us. Our regular offering is a *minchah*. It is a way we thank God for sustaining us. The offering plate moves us from simply saying we love God to showing our love for God. Giving back to him a portion of what he gives us shows thankfulness.

In the tabernacle, the grain offering thanked God for accepting us and for providing the daily bread to sustain the nation. It was offered at least twice a day, usually just after the daily burnt offerings. You can read about it in 1 Kings 18:36. In this offering the idea that God is the sustainer of daily life and the provider of our daily needs is always before us. As Christians, we are to always think the same way.

The purpose of the burnt offering was atonement, restoring a relationship with God. The purpose of the grain offering was worship. It was acknowledging God as the sustainer of our daily needs and thanking God for providing them by giving a portion back to him. It was thanking God for providing our daily bread.

Last week we saw there were three types of burnt offerings based on the economic power of the worshipper. The one you offered was based on your finances. The burnt offering was to be costly but not out of financial reach. In a similar way the grain offering was to be costly but not out of financial reach. There were two types. The first was the most costly grain offering.

Uncooked grain offering — Expensive Worship

When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the Lord's food offerings. Leviticus 2:1–3 (ESV)

The first thing to notice about this offering is it was an offering of fine flour. The Hebrew word refers to the best quality inner kernels of wheat. While these kernels were available to all, creating fine flour took work. You started with the finest inner kernels of wheat, then you ground it with stones and sifted it pure. It

took a lot of work to create fine flour. This was a serious kitchen task. There were no machines to run it through. You did it by hand.

The idea is that when you gave your offering of thankfulness to God for providing for your daily needs, you gave him the best. The quality of what we give reflects the love we have to the one we give. Men, think about this with your wife. Are you buying her something for Christmas? I know she is telling you not to buy her a gift, but if you are smart, you won't listen to her. Imagine if you took her advice literally. You went to a garage sale and found a used sweater with moth holes in it from the 1950s. It had a rancid smell that was a combination of moth balls and body odor. It was on sale for a quarter. You put it in a box, wrapped it and placed it under the tree as her present. On Christmas morning, do you think she will be happy? If that is all the effort you put into her gift, she will let you know clear words that your gift needed improvement. Let's just hope she doesn't have a rolling pin and is not afraid to use it.

The idea is the love we have for the one to which we give our gift is seen in the quality of the gift. God didn't want just regular flour. The offering was to be of fine flour. It took everyone hard work to make it.

In a similar way, when we come on Sunday to offer ourselves to the Lord we come offering God our best, not our leftovers. That means we go to bed at a reasonable hour on Saturday night so we are not asleep on Sunday morning. That means when we serve others by giving our best to others as an offering to the Lord. When we write our offering checks as a way of thanking God for what

he has given, we write our offering checks first as a way of giving God what is first and best.

In addition, they were to combine this fine flour with oil. That made it combustible and held it together.

They were also to put frankincense on it. Frankincense was costly. It was imported. When it was burned, it produced a sweet fragrance before the Lord. It produced a pleasing aroma around the altar.

When people brought this fine flour mixed with oil covered in frankincense, the priest took a handful of it, and all of the frankincense. He put it on the altar to burn. The oil made it burn and the frankincense made it smell good. The remainder of the oil laden flour was given to the priests to be their food.

This is a reminder of how the priests had food. The only way the priests had their daily bread was when the people worshipped God by giving to God a portion of their daily bread. If you had people that weren't thankful and didn't worship, the result was skinny priests.

This offering of uncooked grain mixed with oil and frankincense was an offering usually given by those with a comfortable amount of resources because frankincense was costly and imported. What about those who couldn't afford frankincense?

Cooked Grain Offering — Hard Work Worship.

When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil. You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. And you shall bring the grain offering that is made

of these things to the Lord, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the Lord's food offerings. Leviticus 2:4–10 (ESV)

If you didn't bring an uncooked grain offering, you could bring a cooked grain offering without the frankincense. If you didn't have the money for frankincense, you could substitute your cooking skills. You still had to use fine flour. You still had to do the hard work of preparing and giving the best.

Notice all of these are without leaven. We will explain why in a moment but when you picture them, picture them with fine flour and oil but not having the rising affect of leaven.

Bread or crackers — The first way to prepare your offering was to bake it in an oven. It was baked bread. All of us love the smell of freshly baked bread. Those without the means to buy frankincense baked their grain offering into bread. You could bake it two ways. It could be baked in a loaf, like a traditional loaf of bread without the rising of leaven, or the bread could be put into the form of wafers and smeared with oil. We call those crackers. When you see bread and crackers in the snack aisle, think of this offering. This may not sound appetizing until you think of eating at a fancy restaurant. They pour olive oil in a saucer and sprinkle spices on top. You dip your bread in the oil and spices. It is mouthwatering. This is the taste of these breads and crackers.

Pancakes — If you didn't like bread or crackers, you could cook your flour and oil mixture on a griddle. We call these unleavened pancakes. After your pancake was cooked, it was broken into pieces and oil was poured over it. That

is just like what we do with our pancakes except we pour tasty syrup over them instead of tasty oil.

Donuts — The third way to cook this offering was in a pan. The Hebrew implies this was a sauce pot with a lid. When you put unleavened flour with oil in a pot with a lid you end up with something similar to an unleavened donut. Remember this offering whenever you go to Spudnuts.

I give you these details because we think our lives as far removed from the Bible. We are not. They ate donuts, pancakes, crackers and bread, just like we do. In each of these offerings a portion of the offering was burned on the altar as a pleasing aroma to God and the rest provided the food for the priest. When the people were thankful and acknowledging God as the giver of their daily bread, the priests were happy and healthy. When the people saw themselves as self-made, it was not just the offerings that suffered but the priests were skinny.

Not much has changed. When a church is filled with grateful people that acknowledge God as the one who provides their daily needs by joyfully giving back a portion of what God gives them, the church is healthy. God is honored and the people are blessed.

First Fruits Offering

If you offer a grain offering of first fruits to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your first fruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the Lord. Leviticus 2:14–16 (ESV)

While the grain offering could be given at any time, and sometimes it was given on a daily or even weekly basis, there was an especially appropriate time to give a grain offering. That was called harvest season.

The harvest season offering was an offering of the very first grain of the season. It was the grain everyone couldn't wait to enjoy, but as a way of saying God deserved what is first and what is best in their lives, the people gave an offering of their first fruits. This grain from the fresh ears was roasted with fire and crushed. Oil was put on it as well as frankincense. The priest burned a portion of this first fruits grain and all of the frankincense.

This was a way of acknowledging all of the harvest belonged to the Lord and dedicating the rest of the harvest to the Lord.

The first principle of the grain offering is that God's people were to give a regular grain offering as a way of thanking God for providing their daily needs and accepting them. The first fruits offering was a harvest offering. Sometimes in life God moves us beyond our daily needs and daily paychecks and God provides a windfall. Maybe we receive an inheritance. Maybe our investments shoot through the roof. At that time, it is appropriate to give God a first fruits offering as a way of expressing our gratitude to God for a bountiful harvest season and as a way of dedicating to God the rest of the harvest that follows.

What was to be absent from these offerings?

No grain offering that you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the Lord. As an offering of first fruits you may bring them to the Lord, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma. Leviticus 2:11–12 (ESV)

In all of these were to have no leaven. When God delivered his people from Egypt, he brought them out in such a hurry they didn't have time to bake their bread and give it time to rise. Over time leaven became symbolic of bondage in Egypt, sin and corruption. Leaven creates holes in the bread and makes it rise by a process of fermentation, which is a form of decay and death. In the Bible yeast or leaven is always associated with corruption and decay.

...Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Luke 12:1 (NIV)

Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Corinthians 5:8 (ESV)

In addition, honey was not to be in the offering. Why was there the absence of honey? If you drank from a Gatorade bottle and didn't finish the bottle but left it in your gym bag, you know it doesn't take long for funky stuff to begin growing on the top of your Gatorade, especially in the summer. The rot feeds on the sugar in the drink. The same thing happens with honey. Honey is a sugar. It feeds the fermentation process which speeds up decay. Because death and corruption can't be associated with God, it couldn't be offered on the altar as worship.

Because rottenness should not be part of our lives, it should not be part of our worship.

What must be present in the offerings?

You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt. Leviticus 2:13 (ESV)

Salt was added to all grain offerings. Not only did this make them taste like pretzels, there was important symbolic value. As we know, while leaven and honey cause fermentation and rot, salt is a preservative. This is why we salt meat. It makes it last. Salt was the most common preservative in the ancient world. Salt became synonymous with preserving things, with keeping a promise. This is why this verse talks about the salt of the covenant they had with God. The salt reminded them God made a permanent and binding promise to be their God and they were his people. God was not going to let go of his promise to them. Every time they added salt to their offerings, and the priests tasted salt in the offerings, they were reminded that God was committed to them.

Using salt to represent a permanent binding agreement was not just something Israel did, it was language used in the ancient world. In Babylon, when they spoke of tasting the salt of a foreign tribe, it meant they were in a covenant with that tribe. Arab Bedouins in the ancient world referred to a treaty between people as saying there is salt between us. God had a covenant of salt with David.

Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? 2 Chronicles 13:5 (ESV)

This is a way of saying God promised a son of King David would rule over Israel forever. It was a covenant of salt. It is a rock solid guarantee. Who is that son of David that will reign over the people of God forever? Jesus.

What can we learn from the grain offering?

A few practical lessons pop out.

The grain offerings remind us to give a regular thank offering to God for meeting our daily needs.

Just as the grain offering was a way of giving to God out of what he gave us, to thank him for accepting us and for meeting our daily needs, in the same way, after we are saved by Christ represented in the burnt offering, it is appropriate that we worship Christ by giving a *minchah*, a portion of what God gives us each week as an act of worship to thank him for accepting us through Jesus meeting our daily needs.

The grain offering reminds us that when we give to God we give our best.

The grain offering was to be of fine flour. This was available to everyone but it took hard work to make your flour of fine grain. This reminds us that whenever we give to God, we give of our best, because the quality of our gift reflects the love we have to the one we give. It is just like a Christmas gift. If a husband has the money to spend, he will give his wife a gift that shows his love for her, just like the grain offering of frankincense. If he doesn't have the money, he will take extra effort to make his gift the best he can give, just like in the cooked grain offering people took extra work to prepare and make their best.

The grain offering reminds us God provides for our daily needs.

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,
Deuteronomy 8:11–14 (ESV)

God gave them this command on their way into the land of Canaan.

When they arrived at the land of Canaan God promised to bless them in ways

they couldn't even imagine. The down side of material blessings is it is doesn't take long to forget where we came from. We start thinking we are the ones who provide our own daily bread. We are the ones that provides for all of our needs, when in reality, our daily bread is a gift from God. When Israel offered the grain offering in the land of Canaan, it was a constant reminder that all they had was a gracious gift from God.

Some of us are the same way. God richly blessed us. When we give a regular offering, as we put the money in the plate, let it remind us that we are giving a tribute back to God as a way of thanking him for saving our lives and for providing for our daily needs. All we have is a gift from God. Some of us are financially in the Promised Land. Let's not forget where we came from. The grain offering reminds us.

The grain offering teaches us to trust God for our daily needs.

Others of us can learn from the grain offering to live by faith trusting God to meet our needs.

The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. Deuteronomy 11:10–11 (NIV)

When the Israelites farmed in Egypt, they watered their crops from the Nile River. They either carried a bucket of water by foot to the garden or they dug a drench with their feet to let the water of the Nile run into the garden. When they went to the Promised Land, there was no Nile River. The land was a rich land but it was watered by rain. They needed to learn to farm by faith and trust God for the rain. Giving a grain offering, especially a grain offering of first fruits at

the beginning of the harvest season, was a way they expressed trust in God to provide the rest of your daily needs.

The grain offering was a way God's people expressed their trust in God to provide their daily needs. In the New Testament, Jesus told us to pray this way in the Lord's prayer:

Give us this day our daily bread, Matthew 6:11 (ESV)

The grain offering reminds us to seek God for our daily bread. He is the one who provides it. Seek God for your daily needs. He is the one that will meet them. The grain offering reminds those of us who struggle to seek God for our daily needs in faith that he will provide to give him a regular offering of thanks as he meets our daily needs. In the grain offering the Israelites learned to farm by faith just as we learn to live by faith.

What does the grain offering teach us about Jesus?

In John 6 it says that it was during the Feast of Passover when Jesus crossed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Vast crowds followed him to hear him teach in the wilderness. At the end of the day nobody had food to eat. Jesus met their daily needs. Many of you know the story. All they had was a little boy's lunch of five small barley loaves and two fish. Jesus multiplied that bread and fish and fed the crowd of 5,000 men plus women and children. Jesus provided their daily bread.

The next day many in the crowd followed him to the other side of the lake for more free lunch. This is what he said:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but

for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” John 6:26–27 (ESV)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” John 6:47–51 (ESV)

John told us this happened right next to the Passover. John wanted us to remember that one year before the Passover when Jesus died, Jesus fed a vast multitude their daily physical bread. The day after that happened he told them that what they really needed to live was not a daily meal of physical bread but to daily eat on him. At the time, everybody remembered it but nobody understood it.

One year later Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover when he would die for our sin. He ate the Passover meal with his disciples, and...

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Luke 22:19 (ESV)

“Do you remember a year before when everybody was hungry in the wilderness and I gave them bread to eat? I met their daily needs. Do you remember a year before when the crowds followed me the next day looking for more bread and I told them that what they needed was not more physical bread, but they needed to eat on me? Here we are again.” Jesus was breaking bread and saying it was his body. The bread they needed to eat on was his body, which he would give for them.

At the Passover, what bread was he breaking? It was unleavened bread, because leaven represents sin so all leaven was gone. It was salted bread

because salt represented the unbreakable promise God had made to his people and to David that one of his descendants would be on the throne forever. When he said, "This is my body," it was the same bread of the grain offering. The bread of the grain offering pointed to Jesus' body. Just as the grain offering was the way people in the Old Testament thanked God for sustaining their physical lives, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and the breaking of bread he gave us a way to regularly go back and remember Jesus is the one who sustains our spiritual lives with God, just like he forecasted in the feeding of the 5,000 a year before and he instituted it a year later in the Passover. Today, Jesus, the bread of life sustains the spiritual lives of a vast multitude around the world. What we need is not more physical bread. We need to eat on Jesus the spiritual bread that sustains our lives every day.

Do you see how the grain offering points forward to Jesus and what he came at Christmas to do? Jesus came to bring us into a relationship with God by paying for our sin in the burnt offering and he came to sustain our relationship with God as seen in the grain offering.

One practical challenge I give to us as we leave. The grain offering reminds people to look to God for their daily bread and thank God for their daily bread. In the same way, communion reminds us that we daily need to eat upon Jesus for our spiritual lives to survive. Just as we need physical bread on a daily basis to sustain our physical lives, we need to eat upon Jesus every day to sustain our spiritual lives. This week, if you haven't been eating on him through reading his Word or and talking with him in prayer, you need to begin today. As

important as your physical bread is walking with Jesus, the bread that sustains our lives with God.

If you don't have a Bible, I have a special gift at the connection center of a really easy-to-read Bible for you to begin.



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