

# The Sanctity of Offerings

Leviticus 22:17-33

## I. Introduction

- A. This section represents new but closely-related material from the previous section, where the subject shifts from the priests (21:1-22:16) to the offerings they present.
- B. The audience also broadens. Whereas 21:1-22:16 addressed the priests (21:1, 16; 22:1), now the priests and the entire nation is in view (22:17). In other words, this information is vital for every Israelite to understand.
- C. Nevertheless, the structural elements which marked the beginning and end of each section continue here, indicating that this is still closely related to what precedes it.
- D. The underlying principle of 22:17-33 is that God requires his people to offer him their very best.
- E. In this way, the section serves as a supplement to the material already presented in chs. 1-7 regarding the requirements for offerings. Whereas there, the focus was on the prescribed requirements, here a moral connection is made—holiness involves presenting unblemished sacrifices.

## II. Exposition

### A. The Physical Condition of Animal Offerings (22:17-25)

- 1. Clear parallelism appears in this section as it relates to the physical condition of priests, which has led to some speculation as to their relationship.
  - a) Wenham postulates that the parallel between clean and unclean animals parallels Israel and the nations. Just as Israel—the clean nation—had priests, so in the animal kingdom the sacrificial animals were in some way the “priests” of the animal world.
  - b) The simpler explanation is that God expects both his offerings and those who offer them to be without defect. A defective sacrifice means little even if offered by a perfect priest, just as a perfect sacrifice means little if offered by a defective priest. Both the offering and the priest must meet God’s standard—perfection.
- 2. The overarching concern of 22:17-25 is that offerings presented to Yahweh must be free of defects. These offerings include:
  - a) Burnt offerings, whether offered to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, had to be without defect (22:17-20).
  - b) Peace offerings which were in fulfillment of a vow could not have a defect, but if it was a freewill offering, the animal could contain certain abnormalities (22:21-23).

3. Physical defects which rendered an animal unacceptable included blindness, injuries, warts, festers, and sores (22:22), as well as animals with bruised, crushed, or torn genitalia (22:24).
  4. The goal of offering a perfect animal was to be accepted before Yahweh (22:25).
- B. The Age of Animal Offerings (22:26-28)
1. In addition to the animal's physical condition, its age was also a factor in its acceptability for sacrifice.
  2. Animals could not be offered during the first seven days of their life (22:26-27).
  3. Additionally, one could not offer both an animal and its young on the same day (22:28).
  4. Although there might be a polemical element to these commands, the fundamental principle involves cultivating a regard for the sanctity of life.
- C. Limitations on Consumption of Thanksgiving Offerings (22:29-30)
1. The final restriction given in this section involves thanksgiving offerings.
  2. When given, these could only be consumed on the day it was offered.
- D. Conclusion: Call to Obedience (22:31-33)
1. The section concludes with an exhortation to obedience.
  2. Obedience to God's laws concerning priests and sacrifices is an expression of one's holiness.
  3. Ultimately, these laws underscore the sanctity of God's name as the one true covenant God of Israel (22:32a).
  4. These laws also reveal the reciprocal nature of the sacrificial system (22:32b-c):
    - a) By offering unblemished sacrifices, Israel effectively sanctified God—they treated him as holy (22:32b)
    - b) Yahweh, in turn, was the one who sanctified them through this process (22:32c).
  5. The final force of this exhortation comes from God's reminder that their current spiritual and national identity comes from him as not only the one who sanctifies them, but the one who redeemed them in the first place (22:33).
- III. Chapter 22:17-33 and the NT
- A. Believers are called to offer God their very best—that is what he deserves!
1. Malachi 1:6-14 records God's indictment of the priesthood for offering defective animals. From this passage, several principles are derived:
    - a) Offering inferior gifts dishonors God (1:6-8)
    - b) Offering inferior gifts does not accomplish anything (1:9-10)

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- c) Offering inferior gifts reveals a contemptuous heart (1:11-14)
  2. God wants his people to give from the heart—a small amount given with the right attitude is better than a large amount without care or thought (2 Cor 8-9; Phil 4:10-20)
  3. Ultimately, thankfulness is the proper attitude which propels acceptable giving and acceptable worship to God (Heb 13:15-16).
- B. Christ is our unblemished sacrifice (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:14-15; 7:25-28; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
- C. In the end, the way in which we show our love for God and sanctify his name in our lives is through ongoing obedience.
1. Obedience means don't cut corners
  2. Obedience means give God your best
  3. Obedience means give from the heart
  4. Obedience means care about the details
  5. Obedience means making it about God
- D. "How did people profane the name of the Lord? By disobedience. Likewise today when people fail to prepare their hearts for worship by examining themselves, then they are treating the Lord as unimportant and His table as if it were an ordinary meal. People also profane the Lord when they give to God less than their best or when they use the gifts God has given them for purely secular purposes" (Ross, 388).