

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## The Meal Offering - Contemplation: Leviticus 2

The subject for our consideration today is the meal offering and we find it recorded in Leviticus 2 where it is referred to in our Authorised Version as the meat offering. Last week we had the burnt offering brought before us where we read of the sacrifice of the bullock, the sheep or the goat all of which spoke of Christ's death and all of which went up as an offering of an odour of a sweet savour to God. The meal offering however is one of an entirely different sort; it is a bloodless offering and is not pertinent to the death of Christ but rather to His life here upon earth. The meal offering has no connection with sin-bearing. Let us first consider what we might call the composition of the meal offering.

Its main ingredient was fine flour that is grains of wheat which had been ground between the millstones and beaten until its composition was without any unevenness, roughness or coarseness but continual even smoothness. Such were the graces which characterised our Lord Jesus in every step of his pathway down here. His life was one of absolute perfection, and this offering which typified such characteristics was again one that went up to God as an odour of a sweet savour or an odour of rest. It was not so with other great servants of God; Moses, for instance spoke unadvisedly with his lips; Peter, denied his Lord; John was one who sought a position of prominence in a coming day, and Paul too was guilty of straying from the path of complete obedience. And I believe that this aspect of the meal offering has its application to ourselves, for in Ephesians 1:6 we are told that we are "accepted in the Beloved". If we desire to know God's thoughts about us, we do not look at ourselves but at Christ. In 1 John 4:17 we are told "As He is so or are we in this world". He is our life, Colossians 3:4. In 1 John 5:20 we read "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and Eternal Life". In verse 11 of the same chapter we have "God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son". So we have in 1 Corinthians 4:10, "The life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh". Such a conception of God's admiration of us, His children reminds me of Balaam's forced prophesy of Israel from the top of mount Pisgah. Despite all their shortcomings and their mutterings against Jehovah, it is recorded "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel".

The second ingredient of the offering was frankincense and it was this which gave a fragrance to it. It typified the graces and moral glory of our Lord Jesus, that aspect of the Lord's life which only God could discern. Every thought, word and deed from Him was fragrance to God. You will notice that all of the frankincense with part of the meal was burnt on the altar as a memorial to God. Then we find that oil was also an important part of the offering. In verse 4 the cakes were made of fine flour mixed with oil but the unleavened wafers were anointed with oil. Here and I believe the Holy Spirit is very careful to portray the truth about the man Christ Jesus. Oil, as we know is a type of the Holy Spirit and the mixing would remind us of Luke 1:35 and Galatians 4:4, two Scriptures which speak of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke tells us that "the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." But again we read in verse 4 that the unleavened wafers were to be anointed with oil and here again we have a beautiful demonstration of the way in which the Holy Spirit inspires Scripture to reveal the truths of our Lord's person and work. Our Lord is named in Scripture both as Messiah and as Christ, the former being Hebrew and the latter Greek, but both mean the Anointed. At His baptism by John we read "And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said Thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased." In Acts 10:38 we read that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him". So He was anointed with the Spirit before His earthly ministry and in Matthew 12:28 He can say "I cast out demons by the Spirit of God". In verse 13 of our chapter we find that salt was also a component of the meal offering, or indeed of any of the offerings and it is spoken of as the "salt of the covenant". Salt is a preservative and would be in keeping with this description for it would remind us that the promises of God as revealed in His covenants are enduring. The thought of the salt in its preservative character can be applied in two ways, firstly that the promises of God are vouchsafed to us and secondly that the offering of Christ will preserve us from a coming judgment such as the offering itself had to pass through when it was consumed by the fire. Then in Colossians 4:6 the believer is exhorted to "Let his speech be always with grace seasoned with salt". Grace and truth are often linked together as we find for instance in John 1 where it is recorded that the Word was full of grace and truth verse 14, and then in verse 17, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". Salt in these two contexts would correspond to the truth which was always perfectly exemplified in our Lord in manhood. His words were always uttered in grace but when necessary with the salty application. For instance when the scribes and Pharisees brought before Him the woman that had been taken in adultery and urging the Lords condemnation of her because it was the law of Moses, after He had dealt with these men he asked her "Hath no man condemned thee?":

she replied "No man Lord"; then His reply was "Neither do I condemn thee." Here were His words of grace but immediately He adds "Go and sin no more". Here was the use of the salt.

These are the components that had to be included in the meal offering but there were two specific things that had to be excluded. The first was leaven and bearing in mind that which leaven represents in Scripture it is very pertinent to find that it was excluded from all of those offerings which represented the Lord Jesus. Although it is not generally realised it is without question that leaven in Scripture always represents evil. In 1 Corinthians 5 where the apostle is dealing with terrible immorality in the assembly he says "A little leaven leavens the whole lump". Then in Galatians chapter 5 where he is dealing with terrible doctrinal error in the assembly again he uses the same expression "A little leaven leavens the whole lump". In Matthew 13 among the Kingdom Parables the Lord tells the parable of the woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. The interpretation often given to this parable is that it is a picture of the gospel which will continually be preached until the whole world is converted. Hardly anything could be further from the truth. Do we see anything like this being brought to pass after 2,000 years of gospel preaching around the world? Rather the world seems to get worse and further from God. No! leaven in this case is evil that has been introduced into the professing church and has continued to work until it has brought about the present day position where we find a heterogeneous mass of real and professing Christianity; in short Christendom.

In verse 11 we are also told that honey was another ingredient that was not to be offered with any offering of the Lord made by fire. Honey, in Scripture, appears to have two interpretations. For instance we read that the land of Canaan was a land of "milk and honey". Then, in speaking of the Lord prophetically, Isaiah tells us that "butter and honey shall He eat". But in Proverbs 25 we have what appears to be a warning. Verse 16 reads "Hast thou found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for thee lest thou will be filled therewith, and vomit it"; and again in verse 27 it says "It is not good to eat much honey ". But in connection with the meal offering it would appear that it is the natural sweetness of honey that is being typically pointed to. Natural sweetness, whilst not offensive has to be used with discretion. The Lords ways and words were always gracious but in John 2:4 we read of Him saying to his mother "Woman what have I to do with thee?" Whilst such an expression might have been the mode of conversation of that day it does, to our ears, have the sound of harshness. I am sure that our Lord did not address his mother in this way, but on the other hand there was no trait of natural sweetness or ingratiating. There was no honey. But in John 19 where the Lord is upon the cross and His mother and the disciple John are looking on His words are "Woman behold thy son" and to John "behold thy mother". So we can see that whether it be in his His normal ministry or whether it be in the dying hours upon the cross His expressions are still the same, natural sweetness is absent.

We would now say a little about the sufferings of Christ as they are depicted in the meal offering. As we have already pointed out this offering does not show Christ suffering for sins, there is no atonement in the offering, there is no three hours of darkness; all is typical of the perfect life of our Lord. The first oblation mentioned is cakes that are baked in the oven. The word for 'cakes' means cakes that had been pierced or pricked and gives the thought of abuse, whilst wafers that had been rolled also gives the thought of great pressure, and the fact that they were in the oven and enclosed indicates that they were not open to the eyes of men. They were hidden and I think would represent only those sufferings which were unknown by man but known to God alone. Think of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane where we know that His sufferings were such that His sweat became blood. Who was aware of this but Himself and God? In verse five the offering is baked in a pan and that would be a vessel that is open. Here the suffering of our Lord that were endured could be seen by all and would no doubt come within the embrace of Hebrews 12:3, the One who "endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself". The last vessel mentioned is the cauldron and is perhaps a little more difficult to understand. It seems to point to a combination of public rejection and hostility and to His own feelings. Such conditions might have been experienced, for instance, when He wept over Jerusalem, no doubt experiencing on that occasion the rejection of His own people Israel. How heartbreaking it must have been to the Lord knowing that, in love, He had come to His own people and they had rejected Him.

In Leviticus 6:14-18 we have what is known as the law of the meal offering. After the memorial part was offered up to God the remainder accrued to Aaron and his sons. The expression "Aaron and his sons" would I think represent Christ and His assembly, and is in effect where we come in. They were to eat the meal offering in the holy place, that is it was eaten in the presence of God, and again, so to speak, to emphasise the fact of its holiness it was to be eaten with unleavened bread. Jehovah himself says "I have given it to them" and moreover it was most holy. The offerors had themselves provided the offering but God says "I have given it to them". How much would such an understanding have enhanced the appreciation of the eating. For Aaron and his sons it was their privilege to feed upon that which was representative of Christ Himself and moreover Christ in His manhood. Surely this should be the portion of us all. Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, a tribe that was set apart by God specifically for service at the altar. Aaron was the high priest and to him and his sons was given the privilege of leading the worship of the people. Today Christ is our High Priest but all believers are Levites, all are of the priestly family. There is no special selection of a company who are solely authorised to lead the worship of the saints. The High priest alone was permitted to pass within the veil into the presence of God, and that only once a year. But the veil has been rent and now every blood cleansed child of God is invited to draw near to worship. The way is open for us all but not all believers are aware of their privileges. The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2 that we are both holy priests and royal priests, holy priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices and royal priests to show forth the praises of Him who has called us. Constant contemplation of the Lord

Jesus Christ as He walked through this world, His moral glory constantly being brought before us is surely the very food of our souls. This is feeding upon Him.

Our last consideration of this offering is found in Leviticus 23:15-22 where the children of Israel were commanded to "offer up a new meal offering unto the Lord". What makes this meal offering so significant is that it was to be baked with leaven, which appears to be in total contradiction to what we have been considering this morning. But if this passage is considered carefully I think that once again it will show the accuracy of Scripture. It will be noticed that this new meal offering is brought in, in connection with the feast of Pentecost and we only have to turn to Acts 2 to learn of the great event which took place at that time. There we are told that the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and baptised the then company of believers into one Body, and thus the church was born. Although they were believers they still had that old nature, they were still sinners although saved by grace, and we too are among that number if we are disciples of our Lord Jesus. Therefore leaven formed part of this meal offering to demonstrate what was prophetically figured. The meal offering offered at the time of Pentecost prefigures features of a then coming day. But baked leaven is rendered inoperative, and so it is, or it should be descriptive of those who are members of Christ's body. How marvellous it is that minute accuracies as this demonstrate that the Bible which you and I treasure so much is no ordinary book but the very word of God.

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