

Jesus as Our Grain Offering

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[0:00] I have a strong suspicion that one of our greatest weaknesses, and I mean that as sort of the New Testament church in general, all of us who profess the name of Christ, that we don't know how to read the Old Testament.

Every story whispers Jesus' name. A lot of folks would give their right hands to be on the road to Emmaus with those two disciples when Jesus, after the resurrection, came walking along, and he met them, and he began with Moses and all the prophets and explained to them all the scriptures concerning himself.

And so every story whispers his name, and it is our responsibility to hear it when it's there. That's why I think if we're going to understand what we're about tonight, what we're remembering, what Jesus' death was about, we must understand and appreciate the Old Testament and the sacrificial system that we find there.

And that's what I hope to do a little bit this evening. So turn in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 2. Leviticus chapter 2.

[1:30] Two months ago, we studied the burnt offering. I don't expect you to remember a lot about that message, but we saw how the burnt offering pointed to Christ and his substitutionary atonement on the cross.

The burnt offering was a total sacrifice. It all went up in smoke, and it was to turn away the wrath of God.

And this evening, we're going to turn the diamond a little bit of Christ's sacrifice, his offering, and see what it means for him to be our grain offering. Our grain offering.

So let's begin by reading a few verses here. We'll look at Leviticus chapter 2, verse 1, and we'll read the first three verses. When someone brings a grain offering to the Lord, his offering is to be of fine flour.

He is to pour oil on it, put incense on it, and take it to Aaron's sons, the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the fine flour and oil together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

[2:46] The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons. It is a most holy part of the offerings made to the Lord by fire. Well, let's stop there and look and ask just one question here at the very beginning.

What is the purpose of this offering? What is the purpose of the offering? The purpose is different than the first one, the burnt offering. It isn't atonement.

It isn't atonement. Remember, without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sin. And here, the offering is made of fine flour, but there is no blood in this offering.

And so this offering isn't about the atonement. So what then was its purpose? Well, I think it helps immensely to know the Hebrew here, just a little bit, in verse 1, that it doesn't say grain offering, which is, we call it a grain offering because it's made out of grain.

The word is simply offering, and the word in Hebrew is mikna, which, so it says when someone brings a mikna to the Lord, his offering, that's a different word than mikna, is to be of fine flour.

[4:02] Now, the word mikna means tribute. It means a gift. It's given by a vassal, by someone who's under a king, to his king. So it's given by a vassal to his covenant Lord.

Now, in the ancient world, things worked a lot differently than they do now. Now, a lot of times, if you lived in any sort of good-sized city, you had a king over your city.

But a lot of times, over that king was a great king, the king of the empire or something like that. And so the way the relationship would work would be like this. The lesser king and the greater king would be in a war, we'll say, in some situations.

And the greater king had conquered the lesser king. Or maybe the lesser king was in trouble, and the greater king came in and rescued him. And so, the lesser king became the vassal of the great king.

And so the great king would make a covenant with the lesser king. And in the covenant, he would give the rules of the relationship. So this is how we're going to relate to each other. And these are your responsibilities.

[5:13] And these are the promises that I make to you. And generally, a part of those rules were gifts, were mikhnas. So in Judges, for an example, in Judges Ehud, remember the left-handed man?

He was put in charge of delivering tribute, of delivering the mikhnas to the lord of the Israelites at that time, King Eglon.

And so you remember Ehud went into the presence of the king, gave him the tribute, gave him a whole lot more beside.

The same idea is found in Genesis 32 and 33. So Jacob is getting ready to meet Esau. And you remember what he did. He got all these animals together, and he put them out in front, and he sent them ahead, and he called it a present, a mikhnah.

And so what's the point? Well, when Esau and Jacob met, do you remember what Jacob said? Jacob basically put himself in the inferior position through the whole time they were together.

[6:24] In Genesis 33a, Esau asks, what do you mean by all these droves that I met, that I ran into on my way here? And Jacob answered, to find favor in your eyes, my lord.

So do you hear that? Jacob is saying, I am your servant, you are my lord. Now in the same way with the grain offering, the Israelites were saying to Yahweh that he was their covenant lord, and they were dedicating themselves, body and soul, to him as his servant.

And so it was an offering of dedication to the lord. And even more than that, it was an offering of thanksgiving.

They were recognizing that all of the covenant kindnesses that they had received were coming from his hand. And so they saw him as the fountain, and all the good things that they were enjoying came from him.

Now we don't generally think of our political leaders that way anymore, but in the ancient world, the great king, he was seen as the great father, the great patron of the whole country.

[7:39] And we still talk about our founding fathers, or George Washington, the father of our nation. So take that idea that we have in our mind and multiply it by a hundred times or so, and that's what you had in the ancient world.

The great king, he was looked on upon as this great patron of all his people, and all the good things that they enjoyed came from his hands. And so taxes, in that case, was just something that was a part of what he gave to them, they were giving back to him.

Now, was that right? Well, not at all. No man has that kind of authority or power. But was it right for Israel and their king?

The answer is yes. Yeah. And so everything Israel had, their food, their country, their land, it flowed, it overflowed from God's generosity.

And for that reason, they gave a part of the fine flour. It was a part of, it symbolized their life, their substance. And they gave it back to him.

[8:45] Now, both ideas, this dedication to the covenant Lord, and this thanksgiving for his blessings, it's all wrapped up in the fact that Yahweh was their covenant Lord.

And through the sacrifice, they were dedicating everything that they had, and everything that they possessed, and everything that they were, to the Lord. Well, that's the purpose of the grain offering. Second, briefly, what made up the offering? Notice what it included. We read three of them. It was fine flour, oil, and incense. And there was one other thing.

One other thing. Look down at verse 13. So chapter 2, verse 13, it says this. This sounds very strange to our ears.

He says, Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings. Add salt to all your offerings. So, in this offering, there was flour, which was the basic food of their lives, the basic ingredient of most of their food.

[9:58] Oil, another very common agricultural product that was very much a part of their life. Incense, which made the offering smell good. And then, salt.

Salt. Why salt? Well, salt didn't burn in the fire. Nothing can damage it.

And so, the salt became a symbol of their faithfulness to God. It became a symbol of the strong bonds of the covenant that they were in.

So, it symbolized Israel and there, the Israelites' faithfulness to the Lord. And it also reminded them of the Lord's faithfulness to them. He was their God.

They were His people. And they were dedicated completely, forever, to Him. Is what the offering was supposed to do. And so, the offering renewed, as it were, their vows to the Lord.

[11:01] And it reminded themselves of how faithful He was to them. Now, there was something excluded. We saw what was included. Look what was excluded in the offering.

Look at verse 11. Chapter 2, verse 11. Every grain offering you bring to the Lord must be made without yeast. For you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the Lord by fire. Now, there's a little bit of debate about what this means, and you get a variety of answers. But, most scholars agree that the reason God didn't want yeast or honey in these offerings is that when they went into the fire, they fermented.

They, when they burned, they basically rotted. And so, they became a symbol of sin. And they became a symbol of decay and unfaithfulness. And God wanted dedication without any corruption. He didn't want His people to have any decay in the way that they loved Him, in the way that they served Him. Well, that's what made up the offering. Now, how was the offering made?

[12:16] How did they perform it? We read that a handful, they took a handful of this mixture, and that was offered as the memorial portion.

And the rest, the priest ate, but this handful was taken as a memorial. It represented the whole thing. The small part, it represented all of the offering.

And so, the memorial portion reminded the Israelites that though they were just giving a little bit of what they had from God, He really gave it to them all.

And everything that He had, or everything that they had, belonged to God. And so, again, it was reminding them that they were His.

They were His people. And He was to be their Lord, and their Lord exclusively and without corruption and in complete faithfulness.

[13:17] Well, that was the grain offering. Now, what about Christ? What about Christ? How was His death, His offering Himself, a fulfillment of the grain offering?

stirring? Maybe you already have some ideas. Maybe some ideas are stirring in your mind. We can definitely say, was there anyone else more dedicated to God than the Lord Jesus?

Was there anyone more in His life who lived faithfully without corruption under God's covenant lordship?

And the answer is, He was the only one. He was the only perfect one. The very reason He came to earth, the very reason He became man, was to serve and obey His Lord, the Lord, His Father.

So, turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 10. Hebrews 5 and verse 10. And we see Jesus on the brink of entering time and space as we know it.

[14:33] And we get to hear His words, words that He takes from the Old Testament as He comes into the earth. Chapter 5.

10.5, excuse me. Thank you. Hebrews 10.5. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said, sacrifice an 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. So why did Jesus come? I have come to do your will, O God.

So from the very beginning of the Lord Jesus' time here on earth, He was dedicating Himself to God. He was going to serve the Lord.

[15:48] He was set on obeying Him. And every part of His life became a humble submission to God. So in His incarnation, He dedicated Himself, I will do Your will, O God.

And in His baptism, He dedicated Himself again to live completely for God. Now you remember the story. He comes from Galilee down to the River Jordan, and John is baptizing there.

And He's come to be baptized by John. And John says, no, no, no, no. This is not right. I need to be baptized by you, and you are coming to seek baptism from me.

This is all wrong. And listen to Jesus' next words that are so meek. Let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this, to fulfill all righteousness.

So why was Jesus being baptized? Well, it wasn't for His own sins. He had no sin. He was identifying with us.

[17 : 02] And in order to do exactly everything that His Father wanted Him to do and to be, He had to be baptized. He had to become like His people in every way.

So now here's the Son of God being baptized right along sinners. Because it doesn't matter how you look when all you care about is doing the will of the Father.

So there He goes into the water. And you know what happened next, don't you? God smelled the sweet aroma of Christ's sacrifice, His offering of humble dedication, and He can't keep in His pleasure, and He booms out, this is my Son whom I love, with Him I am well pleased.

And so Christ's offering is accepted. And after His baptism, Christ goes into the desert to be tempted, and Satan comes to Him when he is hungry.

And He says, why don't you turn these stones into bread? And Jesus replied, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So do you see what Jesus is doing?

[18 : 21] He is rejecting all independence from God. He could do it, but He's going to say, everything that I have, everything that I receive, it comes from God.

And so do you hear the spirit of the grain offering in Jesus' words? That I belong to the Lord. Every good thing that I have comes from Him.

Well, what about Jesus' ministry? Well, Jesus was speaking of His Father when He was telling the disciples, and He said, I always do what pleases Him.

I always do what pleases Him. And so Jesus' dedication, it decidedly, it shaped His whole life.

What was on Jesus' agenda? On our to-do list, we have a lot of things. Jesus had one thing, I'm going to do His will, I always do what pleases Him.

[19 : 22] And He didn't have to say like us so many times, well, sometimes I want to do the will of the Father, and sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. And even in the best of times, it is a struggle for us to obey.

But Christ's heart was totally given over to the Father. And that's why He could say, I always do what pleases Him.

Well, that dedication took Him to Gethsemane, and He cried bloody tears, and He wrestled to complete His offering.

what did He say? Father, if You're willing, take this cup from Me. But not My will, but Yours be done. Not My will, but Yours. And so as He edged nearer and nearer to the cross, He gave Himself again, body and soul, to His Father.

[20 : 30] Father. And then that dedication took Him to the cross, and it kept Him on the cross. He was going to finish His offering to His Lord.

Think of Philippians 2. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God, who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing.

Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

So do you see the cross from this perspective? The view is not atonement, the view is obedience, and Christ will obey.

He takes on the very nature of a servant, He humbles Himself and He becomes obedient, and He becomes obedient to death. And so do you see, brothers and sisters, how this grain offering, it was fulfilled in His life, and it reached, it culminated, it's reached its climax in His death.

[21 : 50] The cross was the conclusion of the matter. It was the final bit, it was all put on the altar. When a priest, went to become a priest, when His time, when He became old enough to become a priest, came on, He offered a grain offering, and it was different than a normal Israelite grain offering.

There was no memorial portion. You read about it in Leviticus 6, when a priest became a priest, the whole offering was put on the fire, and the whole offering was burned, because if a priest is going to be the priest of the Lord, he has to belong totally to God.

And here Jesus Christ is, becoming the high priest for His people, and He puts Himself completely, and gives Himself completely to God. And so in His death, it was final and complete dedication to God, and there was no impurities in it, there was no corruption, and it was done in complete

faithfulness.

Every minute of every day of Jesus' entire life, from the time He was born until the time that He died on the cross, it was all to His Father.

It was all dedicated, lived for Him. And so on the cross, He fulfilled Leviticus 2, and He became the final offering, and He did it for His people.

[23 : 25] And that's the sweetness of it. So why did Christ go to such great lengths? Why did He give Himself to obey, and to humble Himself, and to go through such pain, and agony?

Why did He give Himself again and again to obey His Father? It was because we didn't. because we didn't. We lived for ourselves completely at one time, and it was all about us, and we said with Pharaoh, who is the Lord that I should serve Him?

I have no Lord. I am my own Lord. And we desperately needed a righteousness. There was nothing that we could do to earn it.

God deserved everything that we had, and everything that we were, and we failed miserably. And so why did Jesus die?

It was to be our grain offering, to do what we did not do. He was giving God what He should have had from all of us from the time that we were born until the time that we died.

[24 : 38] And He died to become a perfect and complete righteousness for us. God and that's something of what we remember tonight.

That in living and in dying, Jesus won all of our righteousness. There's nothing left for us to do to be justified in God's sight except to believe on Him.

And so if you're unbelieving here, there's nothing that you need to do except to throw your arms around Jesus and say, have mercy on me, a sinner.

There's no good deeds to do. There's no cleaning yourself up. There's only falling into Christ's outreached arms and His arms are still outreached. And if you fall into them, He will save you.

He is enough. His sacrifice is enough. His death is enough and His life is enough. And so you can come and be saved. You can come and be saved.

[25 : 42] Christ has done everything that needs to be done. Except you need to believe. My brothers and sisters, the grain offering was a memorial of what it meant to live in covenant with God.

It was a memorial of the Israelites covenant with Him. And the meal that we are partaking in tonight is to remind you of the covenant that we have in Jesus Christ with God.

So not only do you remember Christ's death for you, you remember and you renew what you said you would do when you believed.

When you gave yourself to Christ, you gave yourself completely to Him. And you remember that everything that you have comes from Him.

Every spiritual blessing that you have, it comes from Jesus Christ, every spiritual blessing, every good thing in your life, it is a stream that starts at the foot of the cross and it flows into your life.

[26 : 48] And so, what should you do? As you remember Christ's death, you should dedicate yourself again to obey and to serve the Lord.

If Christ is your Lord, then serve Him. if Christ has done everything for you, then thank Him. What the Lord's Supper says, what the grain offering says, is that we must no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again.