

Leviticus 2:11–16 Sermon — What God Would Not Allow in the Offering

Leviticus 2:11–16

TEXT

Leviticus 2:11-16 “No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire. **12** As for the oblation of the firstfruits, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour. **13** And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt. **14** And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears. **15** And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it is a meat offering. **16** And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.”

INTRODUCTION

Leviticus picks up where Exodus leaves off. God has brought Israel out of Egypt, given them His law, and the tabernacle has been set up. Now Israel has the tabernacle in the middle of the camp, the priesthood is being established, and God begins teaching them how a sinful people are to approach and worship a holy God.

The whole book follows that burden. Leviticus 1–7 gives the offerings. Chapters 8–10 deal with the priests and their service. Chapters 11–15 deal with clean and unclean things. Chapter 16 gives the Day of Atonement. Then the rest of the book keeps pressing holiness into Israel’s worship and life, including blood, conduct, the priesthood, the feasts of the LORD, the land, and vows. So when we read these details about flour, oil, salt, and frankincense, we are in a book where God is teaching His people that they do not decide for themselves how they approach Him.

Leviticus 1 starts with the burnt offering. God gives instructions for offerings from the herd, the flock, and the birds. Then chapter 2 moves to the meat offering. In the KJV, meat offering here does not mean animal flesh. Verses 1–10 describe fine flour, oil, frankincense, cakes and wafers, and grain prepared in different ways. A memorial portion was burned unto the LORD, and the remainder belonged to Aaron and his sons.

Then we reach verses 11–16. God starts drawing very specific lines: no leaven, no honey burned on the altar, salt must not be lacking, and the firstfruits must be prepared the way He says. The big question is: who decides what God will accept? God does.

And this fits the Bible as a whole. Exodus gives Israel the tabernacle; Leviticus teaches them how God is to be approached there. Later Scripture takes sacrificial language and points us to Christ. Christ is called the firstfruits of the resurrection, and Ephesians calls His giving of Himself an offering and

sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. So first we see exactly what God commanded, then we let the rest of Scripture show us the connections God actually gives.

I. WHAT GOD WOULD NOT ALLOW TO BE BURNED — VERSES 11–12

Leviticus 2:11-12 “No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire. **12** As for the oblation of the firstfruits, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour.”

Leaven is forbidden in this meat offering, and both leaven and honey are forbidden from being burned on the altar. Later Scripture often uses leaven negatively. Jesus uses it concerning false doctrine and hypocrisy, and Paul uses it as a picture of spreading wickedness. So there is a real negative biblical association.

But do not turn that into a rule that leaven always means sin, because God Himself commanded leaven in another firstfruits setting.

Leviticus 23:17 “Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.”

That helps us read verse 12. Something could be offered unto the LORD without being burned on the altar for a sweet savour. So verse 11 is not saying leaven can never appear anywhere in an offering context.

Then there is honey. God clearly says not to burn it. Scripture elsewhere speaks positively of honey, so honey itself is not evil. Why did God forbid it here? The Bible does not tell us clearly. We should be satisfied saying what God said instead of making up a symbol He never gave us.

Saul gives us the larger lesson about obedience.

1 Samuel 15:22 “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Saul had something religious to offer, but sacrifice did not excuse disobedience. When God has already spoken, we do not get to replace His Word with something we think is more sincere, more emotional, more impressive, or more spiritual. Obedience is doing what God said.

II. WHAT GOD WOULD NOT ALLOW TO BE MISSING — VERSE 13

Leviticus 2:13 “And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.”

Look at the change in the passage. Verse 11 says, do not put this in. Verse 13 says, do not leave this out. God regulates the offering in both directions. Some things were forbidden, and some things were required.

Salt is repeated three times in this one verse. Season the offering with salt. Do not suffer the salt of the covenant to be lacking. With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt. God is making sure they understand that this is not optional.

And the verse gives us the main connection itself: covenant.

2 Chronicles 13:5 “Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?”

Numbers 18:19 uses the same kind of language. So salt here is tied to God’s covenant, and those covenant-of-salt passages are connected with something enduring. People often say salt means preservation because salt preserves. That may help explain the picture, but the Bible’s clear word here is covenant.

Obedience is not only staying away from what God forbids. Obedience is also doing what God requires. A Christian can spend all his time saying, I do not do this and I do not do that, while neglecting what God actually commanded him to do. Some things must stay out, and some things must not be lacking.

III. WHAT GOD REQUIRED IN THE FIRSTFRUITS OFFERING — VERSES 14–16

Leviticus 2:14-16 “And if thou offer a meat offering of thy firstfruits unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears. **15** And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it is a meat offering. **16** And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.”

The firstfruits were prepared the way God said. Corn here is grain. The KJV uses corn that way in passages like Genesis 41:5 and 2 Kings 4:42. Oil and frankincense were added, and the priest burned the appointed memorial portion.

Firstfruits gives us a direct New Testament connection to Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:20 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

That connection is clear. Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection. But Scripture does not give us a separate meaning for every detail in verses 14–16, so we should not invent one.

Oil has a strong biblical connection with anointing and the Holy Ghost, especially in 1 Samuel 16:13. Frankincense is part of the holy incense in Exodus 30, and Scripture connects incense with prayer in Psalms 141:2 and Revelation 5:8. Those are real biblical associations, but Leviticus 2 itself first tells us what these things were doing in the offering.

And the sweet-savour language points us straight to Christ.

Ephesians 5:2 “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

God cared about the details of that offering. So when God gives clear instructions in His Word, pay attention to the details. Do not decide that the parts you like matter and the parts you do not like are optional. If God said it, it matters.

CONCLUSION

What would God not allow in the offering? He would not allow the worshipper to decide for himself what belonged on the altar. Some things had to stay out. Some things had to be there. Everything had to be brought according to His Word.

Sincerity does not give us permission to change what God said. Outward religious form does not replace real obedience either. Follow the Word of God.

When Scripture gives a clear symbol, preach it. When Scripture gives a strong connection, explain it. When Scripture leaves the reason unstated, leave it unstated. God decides what is acceptable, and His Word is enough.

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