

Communion with God

The Peace Offering

Leviticus 3:1 If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.

² And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar.

³ And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the LORD, he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails,

⁴ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys.

⁵ Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

⁶ "If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD is an animal from the flock, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish.

⁷ If he offers a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before the LORD,

⁸ lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it in front of the tent of meeting; and Aaron's sons shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar.

⁹ Then from the sacrifice of the peace offering he shall offer as a food offering to the LORD its fat; he shall remove the whole fat tail, cut off close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails

¹⁰ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys.

¹¹ And the priest shall burn it on the altar as a food offering to the LORD.

¹² "If his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before the LORD

¹³ and lay his hand on its head and kill it in front of the tent of meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar.

¹⁴ Then he shall offer from it, as his offering for a food offering to the LORD, the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails

¹⁵ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys.

¹⁶ And the priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering with a pleasing aroma. All fat is the LORD's.

¹⁷ It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood.

(Lev 3:1-17)

Food for the Gods

Odysseus had been stranded on the island of Ogygia for many years, a captive of the beautiful nymph-goddess **Calypso**. That's when Zeus, at the prodding of Athena, sends **Hermes** to rescue him. The great messenger-god came to the island and then to the cave, but there was no sign of Odysseus. Instead, he found Calypso. And she said,

“Why have you come to see me, Hermes - honored, and ever welcome - for you do not visit me often? Say what you want; I will do it for you at once if I can, and if it can be done at all; but come inside and let me set refreshment before

you.” As she spoke, she drew a table loaded with ambrosia beside him and mixed him some red nectar, so Hermes ate and drank till he had had enough, and then said: “We are speaking god and goddess to one another, and you ask me why I have come here, and I will tell you truly as you would have me do.”

(Homer, *Odyssey* 5.85-98)

This was a strange **fellowship-meal**. As they then began to discuss the fate of Odysseus, the two gods consumed the food and drink of the gods—**ambrosia** (“immortality”) and **nectar** (“overcoming death”). One solid; the other liquid. Both **fragrant** substances which were only fit for consumption by the immortal gods.

On the other hand, when it came to eating things like meat, the gods really didn’t do that. **Odin** knew that he would live forever ... until the great and final battle Ragnarök where he would finally perish, that is. So, he decided to fill the Valhalla (“The Hall of the Slain”) with the **Einherjar**—warriors who died in battle. Every evening, these warriors would eat their fill of the great boar Saehrimnir, who was then resurrected that night to undergo this same doom, forever. When asked by king Gylfi if he eats with them, Odin tells him he

feeds his wolves, Geri and Freki, with food from the beast, but for his part, weapon-loving Odin lives on wine alone (*Poetic Edda, Grímnismál* 19; *Prose Edda, Gylfaginning* 38). On writing about this, one of the infamous Grimm brothers says,

Sacrifices to heroes differed from those offered to gods: a god had only the viscera [intestines] and fat of the beast presented to him and was content with the mounting odor; a deified hero must have the very flesh and blood to consume. Thus the Einherjar admitted into Valhalla feast on the boiled flesh of the boar Saehrimnir, and drink with the Aesir (the gods); but it is never said that the Aesir shared in the food.¹

In light of this, consider a phrase we have seen several times already in Leviticus, a phrase that will not end any time soon. The ESV talks about “a food offering ... to the LORD” (Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 16; 3:3, 5, 9, 11, 14, 16; etc).² I haven’t made a big deal of this, yet, because I

¹ **Jacob Grimm**, *Teutonic Mythology* vol. 1, Cambridge Library Collection, Trans. James Steven Stallybrass (Cambridge University Press, 1880), 386. I’ve changed some spelling.

² **Going Deeper**. The meaning of the word for “food” here is debated. Some argue that *ishsheb* (יששב) must be related to the word “fire” *esh* (עש), since fire is nearby to the offering. Milgrom demonstrates that this word cannot mean “fire offering,” because certain offerings like wine libations (Num 15:10) that never enter the fire are still called *ishsheb*. He proposes it is related to the Ugaritic word *itt* (“gift”) and is a shortened form of *lehem ishsbah* or “food gift” (Lev 3:11; 16). See **Jacob Milgrom**, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 161–62.

was saving it for when the idea of a “sacrifice” was formally introduced. We saw when we looked at the burnt offering that a sacrifice (*zebach*, from the word *mizbeach* or “altar”), refers “almost exclusively to the slaughter of animals in order to create a meal.”³ The burnt offering wasn’t that. That word appears for the first time only in **Lev 3:1**, “If his offering (*qorban*) is a sacrifice (*zebach*)...” Thus, now is a more appropriate time to start thinking about this idea.

While the gods eating together or supplying food for us is one thing, it is quite another that people would offer food to the gods. Yet, this all ancient people did and many still do (for instance, when I was on Hawaii’s big Island, as we were driving close to see the current lava flow, we started seeing baskets of fruit all over the place on the side of the road. The natives were offering food to Pele—the goddess of the mountain). In Babylon, we can reconstruct the following procedure.

A table was first placed before the image (the god), and then a bowl of water was provided for washing. After this, food and drink, especially beer, were served, during which time musicians played appropriate music. When the meal was

³ R. E. Averbeck, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 715.

completed, the shrine was fumigated, apparently to remove the smell of food. Finally, the table was cleared and water was offered in a bowl for the image to wash its fingers. It is not known how the god was actually thought to eat the food, though a curtain was drawn in front of the table while the deity was actually eating and while he washed his or her fingers. Apparently, the deity was thought to eat just by looking at the food! The menu could be very varied. It might include oxen, sheep ... lamb, poultry ... incense, soup, bread, flour, sesame, wines, beer and fruit.⁴

If you were a good **syncretist**, mixing biblical and pagan religion, like so many Israelites of old became, then when you offered your food to the LORD, you might be tempted to think that he was hungry, just like the other gods were. In fact, many thought exactly this. This is why, in part, Psalm 50 was written, “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” (Ps 50:12-15).

⁴ M. J. Selman, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 90-91. Again, the story of Bel and the Dragon comes to mind.

So we have food offerings for the LORD, and yet the LORD does not eat them. It is into this context that I now want us to turn to the so-called **peace or fellowship offering**.

The Peace Offering

The Offering

Leviticus 3 presents us with **the third offering** of the book. But this one is not just called an offering, but a *zebach shelamim*, translated by the ESV as “**a sacrifice of peace offering**.” *Zebach* is the word for a **sacrifice**. It differs from the word *qorban*, which means an “offering.” The first two offerings in the book were not sacrifices in the technical sense (even though in one of them, animals died). Their purpose was different from a *zebach*. The burnt offering was wholly burnt to be a pleasing aroma to the LORD. It was **not eaten**. The grain offering was a gift to the Lord, but only in **portion**. The rest was to be the food only for the priests. But now, because this is a sacrifice-offering, the purpose becomes that of **a full meal for everyone!**

Like the burnt, but unlike the grain, this offering comes from blood and animals. In fact, the word *zebach* probably

means something like “slain offering.” A related Akkadian word means “food—probably meat—cooked and ‘showed’ to the gods.”⁵ Hence, a meal of sacrificial animals.

The word “peace” is the real trouble-maker here. The word is *shelamim* (from *shelem*). Perhaps you can hear how it sounds like *shalom*, the normal word for “peace” in Hebrew. It falls into three categories of motivation. Freewill (as in a freewill offering), a vow, and thanksgiving (see Lev 7:11-21). In all three, the common denominator is rejoicing. “You shall sacrifice the *shelamim* and eat them, rejoicing before the Lord your God” (Deut 27:7).⁶ The freewill offering is the by-product of one’s happiness for whatever reasons. The vow is obviously for a very specific reason (Prov 7:14). And curiously, the rabbis reasoned from Psalm 107 that there were four reasons to offer the thanksgiving offering: safe return from a sea voyage (Ps 107:23-25), safe return from a desert journey (4-8), recovery from illness (17-22), and release from prison (10-16).⁷ Those would then be the various occasions someone might offer this offering-sacrifice of Leviticus 3. Thanksgiving offerings were to be accompanied with bread (Lev 7:13-14).

⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 218.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ B. Ber. 54b, cited in Milgrom, 219.

The meaning of *shelamim* is but an educated guess. Most go for the relationship to peace, and hence it is called **peace-offering**. Some see it as related to the word *shalem*, meaning “**whole, sound, or harmonious**,” hence, the **well-being offering**. This is still related to peace, as it would be a well-being offering, and peace is certainly at the center of well-being. Some have seen it “**communion offering**,” because the whole point is that the offerer is eating the meal “**before the LORD**” (**Deut 27:7**) in a **shared meal**. Along with “peace,” a “**fellowship offering**” is a possible translation also of the word the LXX uses.⁸ Some have seen it related to an Akkadian word *salīmu* meaning “**covenant**.” The LXX chose the word *soterios*, “salvific,” which puts a lot of these ideas together. All of these are important components to this offering.

Finally, you will notice that throughout the chapter, this offering must be from the herd or the flock. There are no birds or grain (unless it is for thanksgiving) in this offering. The point is, this is a bloody offering. An animal has to die.

⁸ “Heb. may also mean “peace offering,” but many opt for “sacrifice of well-being”; the meaning of Heb. is uncertain. LXX has a broad range of meaning that is difficult to pin down here. “Peace offering” is certainly a strong option, but the translation “safety, deliverance, fellowship” is also possible.” Rick Brannan et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), note *a* in Lev 3:1.

The Procedure

The herd. The way the offering unfolds is fairly similar to the burnt offering. First, if you are taking your offering from **the herd**, it must be **without defect or blemish** (**Lev 3:1**). In this case, however, you could choose **a male or a female**. Like the burnt offering, the offerer has to **lay his own hand on the head** of his offering and **kill it** at the entrance of the tent of meeting. This would be in the area of the courtyard where the bronze altar was. To lay your hand in the head of your own animal was deeply symbolic of ownership and **transference**. That which was mine I now give to the LORD. It was also deeply **personal**. Joe Priest didn't kill it; I had to do it myself. I had to hold my animal as I watched its life, which I had taken, seep out while it writhed for its last gasps of air that would never come.

Again, like the burnt offering, Aaron's sons, the priests, would intercede at this point. They would take some of the **blood** that was spurting out of its throat and **throw that blood against the sides of the altar** (**2**). The altar had to be holy. So, it gets sprinkled with a bloody baptism for purification.

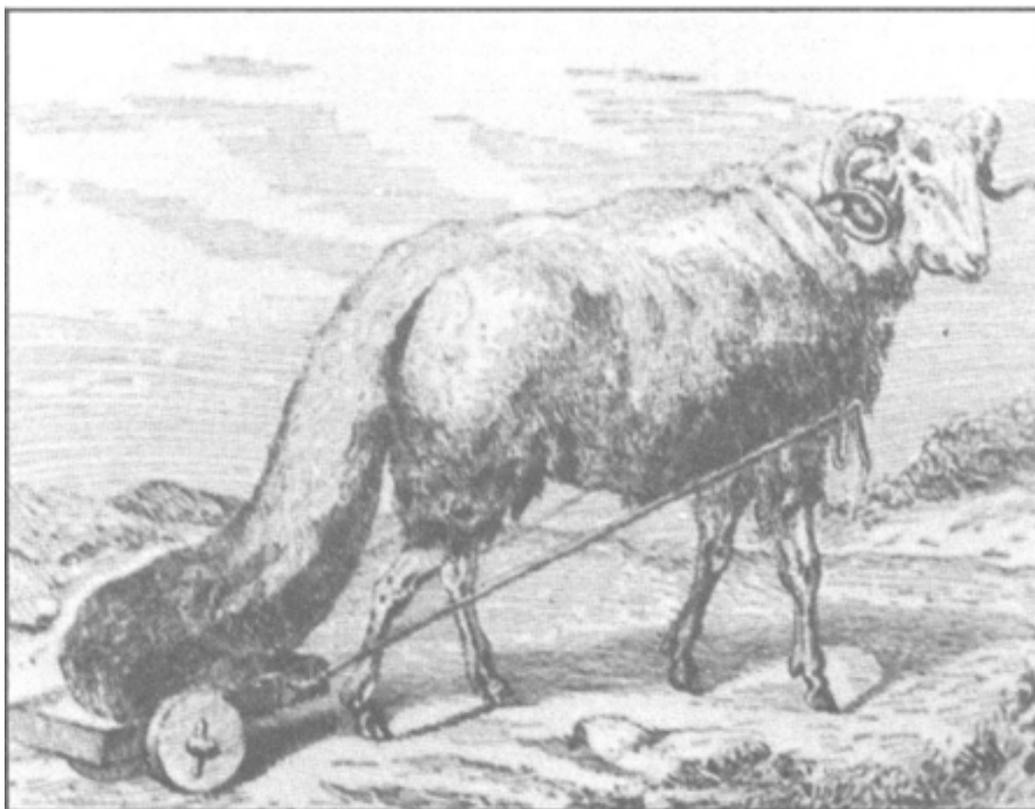
From here, the sacrifice of the peace offering is called “a food (*ishsheh*) offering to the LORD” (3). Even though there was fire here, the sometimes-used translation “fire offering” (NAS) is most likely incorrect, given that wine libations were also called *ishsheh* (see n. 2). Later in the chapter, you have a *lehem ishshah* (3:11; 16), which is clearly a food offering (*lehem* can mean “bread” or “food” more generally speaking). So, this is probably just a shortened form here.

This puts us squarely into the territory where we started with God and food somehow being related. In fact, as the sacrifice (and I’ll use that word specifically because this is now done for the purpose of eating together) now continues, the priest has to “offer the fat.” The specifics entail taking the fat that covers the entrails (the inner organs; vs. 3), the two kidneys and the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver (4), and burning it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, on the wood on the fire. This will become a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD (5).

The flock—The Lamb. The procedure is basically the same for the next possible sacrifice: from the flock (6). The only real difference is that first, vs. 7 singles out the first of two

animals from the flock. There is no singling out various animals from a herd. Here, however, **the lamb** is in view.

Vs. 8 is essentially the same as **vs. 2** with laying hands on the head, killing it, the priest taking the blood and throwing it against the sides of the altar. In **vs. 9-11**, the **same procedures** are then undertaken with the entrails, the kidneys, and liver. But one other thing belongs to the LORD from the lamb. “**He shall remove the whole fat tail, cut off close to the backbone**” (9).



Palestinian Sheep with Cart Supporting the Broadtail
(The Jewish Encyclopedia)

On his journeys around the world, **Herodotus** took notice of the sheep in the land of Israel. One kind has **long tails**, not less than four and a half feet long. Shepherds would sometimes make little carts for their sheep's tails! The other kind has a **very wide tail**, up to eighteen inches across (**Herodotus**, *Histories* 3.113). Usually, they weighed about 15 lbs., but Leo Africanus claims to have seen one in Egypt that weighed over 80 lbs.⁹ Other than this, the flock sacrifice is exactly the same as that from the herd.

The Flock—The Goat. The second possible offering from the flock in this sacrifice is a **goat**. He can offer this to before the LORD (**12**). This time, however, there is **no reference** made to either **male or female** or to it being without **blemish**. Presumably, this is because this is the poorer offering of the two. Then again, there is also something of the **perfect Lamb of God** who came to earth as a man who is never once said to be the Goat of God. Goats could be blemished! God is providing here for those who can't afford the perfect offering.

Nevertheless, everything of the carrying out of this sacrifice (**vv. 12-16**) is **identical** to that of the animal from the

⁹ On the discussion see **Anne Eubank**, "For Thousands of Years, People Have Been Obsessed With Fat-Tailed Sheep," *Atlas Obscura* (Feb 5, 2019), <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/what-is-a-fat-tailed-sheep>.

herd. The only significant difference is the very last line. Whereas the previous two sacrifices end, “an offering to the LORD,” this one ends, “All the fat is the LORD’s” (16). This is followed immediately by vs. 17, which serves as a summary of the principle. “It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood.” The blood is the life. God’s people were not to be vampires. This was never to change as long as that covenant stood between God and the people. But what about the fat?

Fat. Obviously, this is some strange stuff. So why would all the fat belong to the LORD? The simplest explanation is that fat is an image used throughout Scripture to represent prosperity, blessing, abundance, and bounty.

A society almost stinking in its own physical and moral obesity makes it rather hard to understand this (Amos famously called the Israelites fat “cows of Bashan” for similar problems; Amos 4:1). We usually think of fat in terms of sloth and laziness which in turns evokes disgust and loathing.¹⁰ But it isn’t hard to understand that it is precisely only in a culture that has been blessed with great prosperity and

¹⁰ On this discussion see “Fat, Fatness,” in Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 273.

abundance that such obesity and sloth could even occur. For if we didn't have those things, we would be *too busy looking for food* to sit down and eat so much of it.

But it is precisely this way that the Scripture speaks of fat. In **Genesis 27:28**, God blesses Isaac with the covenant promise of the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Meanwhile, Esau is cursed away from the fatness of the earth (**39**). The famous saying, “*kill the fatted calf*” comes from **Luke 15:23**, and doing so is because there is going to be a *joyous feast*.

In a sacrifice, the fat was the choice, the best part. In the sheep, for instance, their *fatty tails* provided energy reserves, and hence yet another positive symbol of fat. Besides that, these tails also essentially run into the same place where the entrails are, so it isn't that much different, except that even to this day the fat is appreciated both for its delectable taste and cooking usage.¹¹ At the supermarket (or even better, Texas Roadhouse), you get to choose your pick of meat. On a cow, you can have your choice gristle sirloin. I'll take a big ol' piece of prime fat filet mignon. Given our discussion in ch. 2, it is important that Abel's gave of his flocks “*fat*

¹¹ *Anissa Helou*, “Those Fat Tails: An Interview with Charles Perry,” *Anissa* (Mar 1, 2012), <https://www.anissas.com/those-fat-tails/>.

portions” (Gen 4:4). The idea with the fat, then, is that God gets the best. The fat is the best. God’s people were to worship him above themselves.

Organs. But that leads to a second question. Why does God want the entrails, kidneys, and liver? You would think, if he was hungry, he would want something like the tenderloin or the short-loin where the good meat is. Instead, he wants fat around the intestines and organs, and that’s all. Why?

First of all, he isn’t hungry! So there must be another reason. This is just speculation, and I didn’t read anyone discuss this, but in Ancient Rome (and many other cultures), there was someone called a *haruspex*. This was a person trained to practice a form of *divination* called *haruspicy*. *Haruspicy* is the inspection of the entrails, and especially the liver of sacrificed animals whereby the person was said to be able to discern the will of the gods. The liver was thought to be the source of blood and the basis for life itself, while the intestines were what we think of as the heart, the seat of the emotions. And somehow, they foretold of destinies. People took this very seriously. Ezekiel speaks of it while captive in Babylon.

For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination. He shakes the arrows; he consults the teraphim; he looks at the liver. Into his right hand comes the divination for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth with murder, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers.

(Ezek 21:21-22)

This is essentially what all Christians going into the dark lands of the pagans would call [witchcraft](#), and it has to have its origins in teachings from the otherworld, because it was practiced by so many and taken so seriously by nearly everyone that did not convert to Christ. So my thought is, perhaps in having the priest burn this up, it was a sign to God that he was not interested in using the sacrifice for his own occultic purposes, and thus the LORD accepted it because it was both the best and it represented simple faith in Yahweh. Whatever the case, there are pretty obvious lessons in both the fat and the entrails parts of this sacrifice.

In taking these parts, this means that the [offerer](#) and priest would get to consume the rest of the animal themselves. And surely, this would have been a very thankful

time where peace was symbolized around the table between God and man. This leads us to consider how this peace offering is relevant to NT Christians.

The New Covenant Fellowship-Offering

So far, I have mentioned several important ideas as a kind of foreshadowing of the new covenant. We've talked about the titles of this term "peace" offering. How it can be translated not only as peace, but as communion/fellowship, covenant, and thanksgiving. Those thanksgivings could celebrate release from prison and would also be accompanied with bread. We've seen that the sacrifice is a communal meal partaken by the offerer, the priest, and God himself. God enjoys the fragrant aroma. The rest enjoy the feast. All of this quite naturally leads us to think of the Lord's Supper.

Sometimes called "Holy Communion," this language comes from 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" "Participation" is the word *koinonia*. It means "fellowship" (YLT) or "communion" (KJV). Thus, it was originally a shared meal between the disciples and God infleshed.

Sometimes called the **Eucharist**, this language comes from **Luke 22:19**. “And when he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body.’” The word “thanks” is the word *eucharis-teo*. Bread was part of thanksgiving peace offerings, but he gave it the symbolic figure of his body, or as Martin Luther called it, “**He is our Meat ... indeed.**”¹² So the meat and blood ideas are both present. Through this, the new covenant meal is reenacted.

Sometimes it is called the **Lord’s Supper**, and this comes straight from the idea of a sacrifice that is presented to the Lord as a food offering in places like **Leviticus 3**. I should also point out that while not mentioned in Leviticus 3, the idea of “**remembering**” is sometimes applied to this sacrifice. “An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be *remembered* I will come to you and bless you” (**Ex 20:24**). Of course, Jesus told us to “do this in remembrance of me” (**Luke 22:19**).

Now, since the earliest of times, Christians have understood the Lord’s Supper to be related in some way to a

¹² **Martin Luther**, “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands.”

sacrifice. You do not get any earlier than the [Didache](#), a book of Christian instruction perhaps written during the days of the Apostles themselves. It closely associates the idea of thanksgiving, offering, and sacrifice saying, “[On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure](#)” ([Didache 14](#)).¹³

But what does this mean? A problem many of us have is that [we always associate](#) the term sacrifice in English with some kind of a vicarious atonement for sin through the bloody death of an animal or of Christ. But as we have seen, more properly speaking, a sacrifice in the OT is a food-

¹³ Going Deeper. Three different Protestant translations of The Didache (Holmes, Brannan, and Lightfoot) all basically read this way. On the other hand, a Roman Catholic translation reads, “[And on the Lord’s Day, after you have come together, break bread and offer the Eucharist, having first confessed your offences, so that your sacrifice may be pure.](#)” Brannan notes, “[It is also possible to translate this as ‘hold the Eucharist’, though with the specific mention of ‘break bread’ associated, such a translation is less likely](#)” (Didache 14 n. 1). This is reasonable because to hold the Eucharist is to break bread; they are not two separate things. Clearly, there is an attempt here to link the idea of “sacrifice” with the Eucharist, which Rome does. I would agree that this is true, however, it is anything but necessary to imply the kind of sacrifice here that Rome insists Ignatius is speaking about. He could simply be talking about giving thanks generally speaking in the holy communion service and that in doing so having confessed one’s sins the spiritual sacrifice is acceptable to God. Or, he could be speaking about “sacrifice” in yet a different way. On which see keep reading the sermon. Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 267; Rick Brannan, trans., *The Apostolic Fathers in English* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012); Joseph Barber Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 234; Francis X. Glimm, “The Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M.-F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh, vol. 1, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 182–183.

offering meal to be eaten by parties in communion with one another. In Leviticus 3, there is no sin in view, no atonement made, yet it is still called a sacrifice. In fact, the etymology of “sacrifice” comes from the Latin *sacra* (“sacred”) and *facere* (“to make, to do”). So, a sacrifice is literally just something **made sacred**. That could be a lot of things.

Yet, still, to call the Lord’s Supper a “sacrifice” can start to make some people very **edgy**. This is especially true when you add the **Roman Catholic** position on the Supper, which is the high-point of Roman Mass. Essentially, their view is that the Supper is a sacrifice *for sin*. If there were an OT equivalent, it would be the sin-offering. Furthermore, they believe it is **propitiatory**. Here is how the **Council of Trent** tried to counter what they perceived to be the Protestant position. “If any one says that the sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or, that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, *but not a propitiatory sacrifice*; or, that it profits him only who receives; and that it ought not to be offered for the living *and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities*; let him be anathema” (*Trent*, Session 23 Canon III).

It seems it was from importing of a very specific meaning of “sacrifice” and its close association with the death of

Jesus that over the course of a thousand years, Rome's position became heretical. They believe, in the Mass, the elements literally become Jesus' body and blood. And through philosophical, rather than biblical, thinking, they then say that the once-for-all Sacrifice of Christ somehow transposes itself into the elements. Though a series of missteps you end up with the blasphemy that became their understanding of the Mass. And at its heart is their view of transubstantiation and that the Eucharist is literally the sacrifice of Jesus as a sin-offering.

However, as we are learning about in Leviticus, there are more sacrifices in the OT than just for sin. There are offering-sacrifices. As Joseph Baylee put it, “The ancient liturgy presents the unconsecrated elements as a eucharist; that is a thank-offering,” which is in many ways what we are looking at in Leviticus 3. For example, Origen tells us of the heretic Celsus that he, “Wishes us to be thankful to these demons, imagining that we owe them thank-offerings. But we ... have a symbol of gratitude to God in the bread which we call the Eucharist.”¹⁴ (Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.57).

¹⁴ Origen, “Origen against Celsus,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 661.

Baylee goes on, “The same offering could not be a thank-offering and a sin-offering. No sin-offering, the blood of which was brought into the holy place, could be eaten (**Lev 6:30**). Therefore, whatever offering was eaten, was not such a sin-offering ... The blood of Christ’s offering [on the cross] was brought into the holy place (**Heb 11:12**); and his sacrifice [on the cross] was consequently a sin-offering which could not be eaten (**Isa 53:10**).”¹⁵ What he is effectively saying is that Rome has confused the Lord’s Supper with Jesus’s death the next day! These are two different sacrifices, not the same one. He concludes, “Thank-offerings were eaten off by the worshippers, the sin-offerings were not. And as the Lord’s Supper is eaten by the worshippers, it cannot be a sin-offering. In this Catholic view of the subject, the English church agrees with primitive antiquity. The Church of Rome utterly disagrees.”¹⁶

Do you understand this? Because they confuse the two, Rome ends up concluding that a physical sacrifice is taking

¹⁵ **Bishop Brown, Joseph Baylee**, *A Controversy on the Infallibility of the Church of Rome and The Doctrine of Article VI. of the Church of England* (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1852), 10.

https://books.google.com/books?id=KMSNhxNwfGwC&pg=PA61&dq=%22lord%27s+super%22+%22peace+offering%22&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_re-dir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj65JjK-q3lAhUQsp4KHQ23Cwk4ChDoATABegQIA-BAC#v=onepage&q=%22peace%20offering%22&f=false.

¹⁶ Brown-Baylee, 61.

place in the Supper. But that isn't necessary (nor is it even rational; it is pure magic). Jesus himself took bread and wine and said it is a symbol, not the actual thing. It is a remembrance. The Supper celebrates through its own feast something that will be done through a *different* sacrifice; but it is not that sacrifice! Jesus' death is not identical with the Lord's Supper, even though both revolve around the same event. One is the event; the other is its remembrance, and through it, real communion with Christ is had through a fellowship offering.

So long as you know what you are saying, you can still refer to the Supper as a sacrifice, just **not a sacrifice for sin**. It is a sacrifice **in light of the sin-offering** once-for-all. It is a sacrifice of feasting in joy in a peace-offering or thank-offering or communion-offering with the living Christ as we celebrate the fact that his death never has to be done again. All of this is embedded in the meaning of Leviticus 3 and the rest of the book. In his little book importantly titled, *The Feast After the Sacrifice*, **James Booth** says, “**In the peace offering, the feast was the principle feature; and if this represented the most intimate fellowship with Jehovah, friendly intercourse, home and table companionship with Him, we must**

seek in this the object and end of the sacrifice.”¹⁷ Do you wonder, then, why the Apostle Paul refers to the Supper as “the Feast?” “Therefore, celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Co 5:8 NAS). In this thanksgiving peace-offering Jesus instituted, we are to be joyful together, partake with one another and with Christ, and be glad!

Again, Paul uses the language of the OT to talk about the Supper. After describing our *koinonia*, he says, “Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat *the sacrifices participants in the altar?*” (1Co 10:18). So, he calls it a sacrifice. On the other hand, of Christ’s death he (or, I think Luke, his close companion) says, “We have *an altar* from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat, for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are *burned outside the camp.*”

¹⁷ James Booth, *The Lord’s Supper: A Feast After Sacrifice* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), 30. https://books.google.com/books?id=GvA-CAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA30&dq=%22lord%27s+supper%22+%22peace+offer-ing%22&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjfoILC9K31A-hUhHTQIHc7rDgMQ6AEwBnoECACQAg#v=onepage&q=%22lord's%20sup-per%22%20%22peace%20offering%22&f=false. Booth is citing Dr. J. H. Kurtz, who goes on to give three logical progressive stages that are pictures through three offerings: the stage of atonement (justification) in the sin offering, sanctification (holiness) in the burnt offering, and the mystical union in the peace offering. Wonderful stuff!

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” (Heb 13:10-12).

In other words, Scripture does not confuse Jesus’ death sacrifice with his Supper-sacrifice! The two are not the same thing. The former justifies us. The latter sanctifies through real fellowship and communion with the living God. One fulfills the sin-offering; the other the peace-offering. Wenham says of the similarities of communion with the peace offering, “Both demand that the worshipper should be clean, i.e., in a fit state to participate.”¹⁸ This is the part justification plays in an initial sense. You must be saved before coming to the table.

But, once you are, this is one of the reasons why it is so important to attending yourself regularly to the Supper. It is literally a communion with the living Christ, a feeding on his spiritual body which is your Manna and his spiritual blood which is your life. In fact, in this regard, someone notes that Jesus actually **reverses** something from **Leviticus**

¹⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 82. **APPLICATION FOR LEV 7:20. WENHAM.** On the other hand, there is a sanctifying sense of this too. He continues, “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord’ (1Co 11:27; cf. Lev. 7:20). Divine punishment is promised on those who eat without discerning the body. ‘That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died’ (1 Cor. 11:30). Here Paul is putting the provisions of Leviticus into more modern terms.”¹⁸ (he keeps going with the Ten Commandments).

3:17. He told us that in this peace-offering, “This is my blood of the new covenant, drink you all of this” (1Co 11:25). Why? Because, “The Blood is the Life.’ And it is the communion of the Blood of Christ which conveys to all prepared hearts the constant grant of remission of sins, and evermore renews the spiritual being by fresh supplies of Life from the Everlasting Source of Life.”¹⁹ This is not the old covenant, but a new covenant, and now you need his life in your to live yourself.

The great type is that, “Jesus [is] our new covenant ratification ‘peace offering.’”²⁰ Not his death, but his offering of communion to us because of his subsequent death *and resurrection*. Heiser says, “Think of it this way, the personal fellowship of the Lord’s table is no longer an animal sacrifice. The sacred meal is one that commemorates the sacrifice of

¹⁹ John B. Dykes, *The Holy Eucharist: The Christian Peace-Offering, A Sermon Preached in S. Oswald’s Church Durham, On Sunday, Nov 3, 1867* (London: Rivingtons, 1867), 13-14, https://books.google.com/books?id=eG8yZ6YRrn4C&pg=PA13&dq=%22lord%27s+supper%22+%22peace+offering%22&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_re-dir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjfoILC9K3lAhUHTQIHc7rDgMQ6AEwBX-oECAMQAg#v=onepage&q=%22lord's%20supper%22%20%22peace%20offering%22&f=false; see also Wenham, 83.

²⁰ Richard E. Averbeck, “Offerings and Sacrifices,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 579. He also writes, Essentially, the fat, kidneys and liver of the peace offering constituted a food gift to the Lord burned on the altar (e.g., Lev 3:3–5; 7:22–25), but the eating of the meat in a communal meal was an expression of communion between the worshipers and their Lord, and sometimes between the worshipers themselves in covenant ratification or enactment (e.g., Gen 31:54).” “Sacrifices and Offerings,” *ibid.*, 709.

the Messiah, not an animal that you brought. The life giver gives his blood and then takes up his life again, but he doesn't take up the blood. Remember that Christ's resurrection body didn't have blood. Because after the cross, there remains no more sacrifice for sin."²¹ Yes, things are very different for us today in light of Christ's coming. And yet, they are intimately related to the sacrifices of Leviticus. We've seen the fulfillment of the burnt offering in the pleasing aroma of our lives, of the grain offering in the living sacrifice of our bodies, and now in the peace offering, in Jesus' gracious supping with us people who are united with him in spiritual places.

²¹ Michael S. Heiser, *Notes on Leviticus from the Naked Bible Podcast*.

Appendix:

Thoughts on the Last Supper, the Passover, and the Peace Offering from others:

“*Jesus as our new covenant ratification “peace offering.”* According to Luke 22:1–23, the “last supper” of Jesus was a Passover meal. Toward the end of that meal Jesus created a new ritual on the foundation of the Passover ritual. The new ritual is the basis of the ordinance that we have now come to call “Communion,” the “Eucharist,” the “Last Supper,” or the “Lord’s Supper.” As is well known it includes Jesus words over the *bread* (Luke 22:19) and the *cup* (Luke 22:20). Both elements were part of the underlying Passover ritual, but Jesus referred to the bread as his own “body” and the cup as his own “blood.”

Jesus referred to the cup as “the *new* covenant in my blood.” The similarity to Moses’ statement in Exodus 24:8 that “this is the blood of the covenant” makes it inconceivable that the apostles would have failed to connect Jesus’ words with the covenant ratification ritual back in Exodus 24. In this case, however, the blood was for the ratification of the *new* covenant, which of course recalls Jeremiah 31:31–37 (see esp. v. 31).”²²

“More directly related to the OT peace offering is the Lord’s supper. At the last supper⁴⁵ Jesus referred to the cup of wine as “the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor. 11:25). In so doing he alluded to the blood of the old covenant (Exod. 24:8). When the Sinai Covenant had been agreed to by the people, Moses took the blood of the burnt offerings and peace offerings and threw it over the people and said, “Here is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you.” The

²² Richard E. Averbeck, “Offerings and Sacrifices,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 579.

⁴⁵ Wenham’s note: The last supper may indeed have been a Passover meal (Matt. 26:17–19; cf. John 18:28). This would not invalidate the theological connections we are drawing between the peace offering and the Lord’s supper, for the Passover could be described as a specialized type of peace offering that was celebrated once a year by the whole nation.

last supper was more like the peace offering than a burnt offering in that the peace offering and the last supper were both meals, while the burnt offering never was. Christ's death on the cross is a closer parallel to the burnt offering. His sharing of his body and blood with his disciples forms the closer parallel to the peace offering."²³

A Couple Other Notes:

The peace offering is not mentioned in the New Testament. However, there are some resemblances between the Lord's Supper and the Old Testament peace offering. Both involve the eating of a festive meal, and the participants in the meal are required to be clean (7:20; 1 Cor. 11:27). One of the main features of the feasts is communion/fellowship with God: the rites represent peace that exists between the human and the divine. As Bishop Mackarness expresses it, 'Especially in acts of sacramental communion with his Lord does the Christian gather up and consecrate the powers of his lifelong communion with heaven. Then it is that he has most vivid impressions of the nearness of God to his soul, a most comfortable assurance of strength for his need.' But, clearly, in both rituals such fellowship requires atonement, the spilling of sacrificial blood in order to bring about peace.²⁴

24:8 the blood of the covenant. When Jesus uses this phrase of the cup in the Last Supper (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24), he is likening the Christian communion meal to the OT peace offering (see note on Ex. 24:9–11; cf. also 1 Cor. 10:17–18).

24:8 Consecration through blood prefigures consecration through the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:18–26).

²³ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 82.

²⁴ John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, EP Study Commentary (Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2004), 51.

24:9–11 Moses, Aaron and his sons, and 70 of the elders partake in what the peace offering (v. 5) signifies: fellowship and communion in the presence of God. The description focuses on the fact that the men **saw the God of Israel** (vv. 9–11) and remained unharmed. According to 33:20 “man shall not see me and live,” so the “seeing” here in 24:10 was something different from that of 33:20; cf. 33:23, which perhaps denotes a partial, as opposed to a full and complete, vision of God (see notes on Matt. 5:8; John 1:18; Rev. 22:4). **p 183** The description of the clear surface they saw **under his feet** may indicate that this is all they saw of God.

24:11 Fellowship with God prefigures our seeing God in the face of Jesus Christ (John 14:9). Christians enjoy fellowship with God in Christ, who is the food of eternal life (John 6:53–58), symbolized in the Lord’s Supper and consummated in the final feast (Rev. 19:9; 22:4).²⁵

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²⁵ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 182–183.

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