



This week, Jeremy taught on the importance of tithing. Most people automatically think of money when the topic of tithing comes up, but it is actually more than that. We do not live under the Old Testament instruction to tithe but sacrificial giving of our all is still important.

Background: Judaism has many different types of offerings. One of these is the burnt offerings that were offered up twice a day in the temple. It is clear from the Book of Acts that the followers of Jesus continued to see temple worship and participation in the prayers and offerings of the temple as an important part of their faith. Acts 3:1 for example says that Peter and John were going to the temple at the time of prayer for the burnt offering sacrifice. As believers in the sacrificial death of Christ, they would not have attended for the purpose of cleansing their sins. They were there for some other reason.

Jewish tradition holds that the purpose of sacrifice is to draw near to God in obedience. The offering is a symbol of total, complete submission to the will of God. In the traditional Jewish burnt offering, everything is burned up and consumed on the altar. Nothing is left but the aroma.

*Since Jesus paid the price for our sins, what is the point (if any,) for a Christian, of sacrificing to God?*

*What is the difference between a sacrifice and an offering? Can they be one and the same?*

*Clearly, an omnipotent God has no real use for burnt offerings. So why did He require them?*

#### **Into the Word:**

In most cultures and religions, sacrifices were offered to an idol or totem representing a god. It was thought that by giving food or valuables to the gods they would be appeased and more likely to deal with us favorably. The idea was that the gods could use the items being offered- eat the food or use the clothes, weapons, jewelry, or other items. Judaism was different.

YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is all knowing, all seeing, and all powerful. The Bible makes it clear that He has no need of anything from us. There is nothing we can do to fill any need of God or cause Him to deal with us more favorably. God looks on the heart.

Even so, God commanded His people to make sacrifices, to tithe, and otherwise do service to Him. Since God has no need of these, these cannot possibly be for God's benefit. The burnt offering especially points this out. There is nothing left of the burnt offering for God to use.

So if the point of the offerings must be what they do for or to US, rather than what they do for God. In some way the total giving of ourselves in a sacrificial offering to God changes us as we draw near to Him.

*Have you ever given up something for God? What was the result?*

*Think of the most precious thing in your life (apart from God), and then think of what it would be like to give that up. What kind of thoughts or feelings does that create in you?*

*If we love God and one another, how can we move on to the complete and total dedication which is expressed in an act like the burnt offering? Is such a surrender to God even possible in these days?*

### **Apply the Word**

We might be tempted to think of the Jewish people making their offerings with sad expressions and bemoaning the fact that they were having to burn up something precious to them. The exact opposite is true. The offering of sacrifices at the temple was a time of rejoicing. The Hebrews felt privileged to be able to draw near to God through sacrifice. It was an honor and a joy.

***Set aside an hour this week to look for ways that you can give the things you value most as a “sweet fragrance” to God. Our time, our privacy, our gifts, our finances- all of these are worth more as offerings than when kept to ourselves.***