

The Old vs. The New: Sacrifices

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be Jewish under the Old Covenant? To be honest, sometimes I'm so confused by the laws in **Leviticus** I'm not sure I would have always known exactly what I was supposed to be doing. But one aspect that really gets to me is all the sacrificing that had to take place.

First, **Leviticus** lays out the many different kinds of offerings there were. **Leviticus 1** describes the burnt offerings. That offering could have been either a bull from the herd, a ram from the flock, or a pair of turtledoves or pigeons. **Leviticus 2** explains the grain offerings. They could offer a fine flour offering, a baked offering, or a roasted offering. Of course, nothing they baked or roasted could have leaven in it. **Leviticus 3** presents peace offerings. This offering could be male or female of the herd or the flock, but, like the others, it must be unblemished. The priest had to remove several different parts of this one. **Leviticus 4** talks about the sin offerings for individuals, the nation, and the leaders. This one had to be a bull. They had to remove some parts of it, burn some parts of it on the altar, and take some parts of it outside the camp to burn. For some sins (**Leviticus 5**), the sacrifice could be a female sheep or goat. If they couldn't afford that, then it could be two turtledoves or pigeons. **Leviticus 5** goes on to speak of the guilt offering. If anyone sinned in the holy things of the Lord, that is in the issues surrounding the temple and its vessels, they offered a guilt offering. A ram was to be offered and he was to make restitution regarding whatever holy implement he had defiled by bringing the value of the vessel and adding 1/5 to that value.

These were offerings that individuals offered on various occasions. **Numbers 28-29** actually describes regular offerings that the priest had to offer as a bare minimum of sacrifices.

Numbers 28:3-8 describes the daily offering. In the morning and at evening, they had to offer a burnt offering of a lamb, plus a corresponding grain offering. That's two sacrifices every day.

Numbers 28:9-10 adds two more burnt offering lambs every Sabbath day, along with the corresponding grain offering.

Numbers 28:11-15 talks about the monthly or new moon sacrifices. Every month the priests were to offer two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs, and one male goat, an additional 11 sacrifices every month.

Numbers 28:16 reminds us of the Passover sacrifice. I'm not sure how to count the number of sacrifices for that day. But **Numbers 28:17-25** talked about the extra prescribed sacrifices during the week of Unleavened Bread. Each day they offered an additional two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs, and one male goat, eleven sacrifices total.

Numbers 28:26-31 prescribes the sacrifices for the Feast of Weeks and the day of first fruits (Pentecost). Once again, we add 11 sacrifices: two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs, and one male goat.

Numbers 29:1-6 adds an additional sacrifice on the first day of the seventh month. In addition to the daily and new moon sacrifices, they were to sacrifice 10 more animals: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs, one male goat.

Numbers 29:7-11 adds ten more sacrifices on the tenth day of the seventh month: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs, and one male goat. But that doesn't include the three sacrifices already prescribed in **Leviticus 16** for that same Day of Atonement. Thirteen extra sacrifices on that day.

The rest of **Numbers 29** explains the sacrifices of the Feast of Booths or Harvest. There was a different number each day. The total for the week is 199 sacrifices. Wow!

This list in **Numbers 28-29** does not include the free will offerings described in **Leviticus**. But, if I've counted it correctly, that comes up to 1251 sacrifices prescribed as a bare minimum every year. That's millions of sacrifices over the years the Old Covenant was in effect. I can hardly imagine what the temple in Jerusalem must have smelled like. The stench of death, the squeal of dying animals, the smell of burning flesh, the flies, it must have been difficult to stand as a priest.

Contrast all of that with **Hebrews 10:11-14**:

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (ESV).

All those sacrifices for all those years and they weren't actually getting the job done. But Jesus has offered the one sacrifice that we need. Makes me glad to be a Christian. How about you?

--Edwin L. Crozier