

# The Guilt Offering (Leviticus 5:14-6:7, 7:1-10)

To read:

1. Leviticus 5:14-6:7, 7:1-10
2. Matthew 18:21-35

## 1 I. Introduction

### A. This morning we are continuing our study of Leviticus together

1. As we start another morning in Leviticus, I want to remember what the main point of Leviticus is - how can Israel dwell with a holy God? And, as we apply it to ourselves, how can we dwell with a holy God?
2. And, if we put our outline up on the board, we're in the first half of the book, what we've titled "Judicial Holiness," which is answering the question, "How do we become holy?"
3. And we're continuing in the first subsection, what we've titled "Provision for holiness" in Leviticus 1-7 which describes the sacrificial system

### 1 B. And we see five types of sacrifice as we read these first chapters of Leviticus

1. Several weeks ago we started with the Burnt Offering and talked about propitiation and satisfying God's wrath
  - 2 a. So, if we go back to our table that we started several weeks ago, the burnt offering taught us that sin has made God very angry with us, sin has provoked God's wrath
  - 1 b. So we need a sacrifice that will absorb and turn away God's wrath, a sacrifice that will make us acceptable before God again
2. Then we looked at the Grain Offering and considered how we owe ourselves in worship to God
  - 1 a. And the Grain Offering didn't fit very well on our table because it wasn't a sacrifice like the other sacrifices, it didn't exist to cover sin in some way, so we set it off at the bottom
  - 2 b. The Grain Offering shows us that we belong to God so we owe ourselves to God in worship
3. Third, we looked at the Peace Offering and considered fellowship with God and with others
  - 1 a. The peace offering was a blood sacrifice again, so it told us something about sin - sin breaks fellowship, primarily with God, but also with each other
  - 1 b. So we need a sacrifice that restores fellowship, that repairs relationships
4. Last week, week we looked at the Sin Offering and considered the corruption, the defilement of sin
  - 1 a. The Sin Offering showed us that sin was dirty, it was filthy and no filthy person could come into God's house
  - 1 b. So we need a sacrifice that will wash away the stain of sin, that will cleanse us from its filthy and destroy it
5. This week we are going to finish the offerings by looking at the fifth and last offering in Leviticus, the Guilt Offering in Leviticus chapters 5 and 6

### 1 C. Proposition: The guilt offering shows us that sin has put us in debt, a debt that we have no hope of paying, and it promises that a sacrifice will be provided that will pay the debt.

1. What did it teach the ancient Israelites about God?
2. How should this point us to Christ?
3. How should this be applied to the New Testament believer?

## 1 II. What did this teach the ancient Israelites about God?

- 1 A. Like last week, I want to start our meditation by making some initial observations - specifically, I want to ask the question, "what distinguishes the sin offering from the guilt offering?"
1. Actually, as you go through Leviticus, this is a fairly hard question to answer - the sin offering more-or-less bleeds into the guilt offering as you go through the first chapters of Leviticus
    - 1 a. Actually, if Leviticus 5:14 didn't exist - *the Lord spoke to Moses, saying* - it would be almost impossible to draw a line between the two offerings; but, helpfully, God Himself drew a line there and said there were two different offerings, but how are they different
      - b. To answer this question, several theories have been proposed:
  - 1 2. Many commentators try to define different types of sin or different degrees of sin to the sin and the guilt offering
    - a. Both the sin offering and the guilt offering give specific examples of different sins, and it is a useful exercise to try to understand why those specific examples are given in each offering
    - b. And, working on the specific examples, commentators will try to define different types of sin that the sin offering and the guilt offering covered, or different severities of sin - some will say that the guilt offering was for more serious sins than the sin offering, others will claim the opposite
    - c. And, let me say this again, thinking through the specific examples in each section is very helpful and necessary, but I think trying to use the examples to define types or severities of sin covered by each offering is not the most helpful way of understanding the two offerings
    - d. And one reason I think this is that there is a catch-all phrase in both offerings that is almost exactly the same, both the sin offering and the guilt offering were to cover the same thing in the general sense
      - 1 ✕ i. So, we can start with the general sense of the Sin Offering, Leviticus 4:1-2 - *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them,*
      - 1 ✕ ii. Leviticus 5:17-19 - *"If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD."*
        - iii. My conclusion from these verses is that the Sin Offering and the Guilt Offering were not primarily designed to cover different types or severities of sin, because
  - 1 3. So, if it's not primarily the type or severity of sin, what does distinguish the sin and the guilt offerings?
    - 1 a. As I look at the text, the main distinguishing feature seems to be that word, 'guilt' - the sin offering dealt with sin, especially the filthiness of sin, while the guilt offering dealt with guilt
    - b. The word translated 'guilt' in this section is found a couple of times in the sin offering, but it becomes much more prevalent in the section on the guilt offering
    - 1 c. Even going back to our general commands that we contrasted a moment ago, the major difference between the two general commands is that the offeror realizes his guilt
    - 1 d. And then, having realized his guilt, he offers an animal as guilt - like the sin offering, there is no word for guilt offering, literally the animal is guilt, it is offered as guilt
  - 1 4. So, to understand the guilt offering, we need to understand guilt: What is guilt?
    - a. Now, we have a slight challenge here - we have an English word 'guilt' and we have a Hebrew word that is translated 'guilt' - we don't necessarily need to define the English word, but the Hebrew word - what is Leviticus talking about here?
    - b. The Hebrew word here translated guilt seems to have a lot to do with debt - in fact, only a few verses before in Leviticus 5 in the ESV it is translated as 'compensation' to pay back
      - 1 1 c. Or in Numbers 5:7 - *And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong.* - literally, "to him to whom he was guilty" - he needed to pay restitution because he was guilty, he was in debt
      - 2 2 d. Even in Leviticus 5 and 6, the guilt offering is characterized as making restitution, paying back a debt, Leviticus 5:16 - *He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest.* Or Leviticus 6:4 - *he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.*

15. So, coming back to the start, how does this fit with the specific examples given in the guilt offering?
  - a. There are two sets of specific examples given for the guilt offering - the first deals with transgressing in misusing the holy things, things associated with the Tabernacle, and the second primarily deals with different types of property crimes
  - b. Though very different, both sets of examples are excellent examples to see the debt that sin brings: misusing the holy things is stealing God's property and you will be required to pay it back, while misusing others' things is stealing their property and you will be required to pay it back
  - c. These examples highlight the debt that characterizes sin - I don't think the guilt offering is meant to be limited to these cases, but these cases are highlighted to help us understand the meaning
  - 2d. So, we could come back to Leviticus 5:19 and retranslate it slightly - *It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD.* - could perhaps be translated as - *It is his debt, he was in debt, in debt to God.* - sin had put them into God's debt and they needed a sacrifice that would satisfy their guilt, that would pay back debt - So now we can turn and think about what this sacrifice taught the ancient Israelites

## 2 B. First, sin put them into debt

1. As with each of the offerings we've looked at, the first teaching point is the purpose of the offering, why was the offering necessary?
2. The guilt offering was offered because the offeror realized his guilt, realized his debt to God and to others - he came to pay back the debt
3. And all sin brings debt, all sin puts us into debt to God because this world is not ours, it was not made by us or even primarily for us, even we are not our own - we were created by and belong to another
4. Any time we don't joyfully do our Creator's desire we are stealing from Him, taking what belongs to Him and using it to serve ourselves
5. The guilt offering should have reminded the Israelites of that truth - my sin has put me in debt to God, because of my sin, I owe an unpayable debt to God

## 1 C. Second, that debt must be paid

1. When the offeror realized his guilt, he was commanded to bring a guilt offering - acknowledging the debt was not enough, it had to be paid back
2. This is where the translation becomes important - remember there is no word for 'guilt offering', this offering was offered as guilt, it was his debt, it was the repayment
3. So every time the offeror brought his guilt offering, he should have been reminded not only of the reality of his guilt, but the necessity to pay God back - God would not let the accounts stay unbalanced but would require repayment

## 1 D. Third, the payment for that debt required his life

1. The guilt offering was a blood sacrifice - an animal was slaughtered and offered to God - and like with all other blood sacrifices, somehow that animal represented the offeror - the offeror was the one who should have died
2. The guilt offering reminded the offeror how great his debt was - he owed a debt to the Creator and King of the Universe that could never possibly be repaid because he had nothing of his own to offer, he was completely resource-less, completely unable to make any sort of repayment
3. And so the King would come demanding repayment, nothing would be offered, and the King would demand his life instead - the debt was so great that the King would demand his life
4. The guilt offering should have reminded the offeror of this every time - this animal is dying because that is how great my debt is to God and how completely unable I am to repay it, my debt will cost my life

## 1 E. But finally, a substitute would be provided

1. As with each of the sacrifices, there is a glorious promise embedded in it as well - yes, they were in debt to God and that debt would require their life, but the promise of the guilt offering was that a substitute would be provided
2. There would be a sacrifice made that would pay back their debt, they could present themselves before the King, point to this sacrifice and say, "my debt has been paid" and they could walk away free
3. The offeror came to the Tabernacle, or later the Temple, acknowledging an unrequitable debt but walked away debt free because a guilt offering had been offered that paid their debt for them
1324. The true Israelite should have seen this playing out in front of their eyes, often in their very hands, and they should have looked for a glorious sacrifice that would pay their debt once and for all (**Table, Kid's Question**)

### 1 III. How should this point us to Christ?

#### A. As we turn to our second point, I want to consider how Jesus fulfills the promise of the guilt offering? How was the guilt offering about Him?

1. And the answer is exceedingly simple: Jesus is our guilt offering; Jesus paid our debt in full

#### 1 B. Even in the Old Testament, there was hope of a greater guilt offering that would be paid

1. In fact, a passage that I would assume is many of yours favorite passage is centered on the guilt offering
2. Isaiah 53 describes the suffering servant who would bear the grief and the iniquities of the people
3. And the climax of the passage happens in Isaiah 53:10 when the passage turns from sad and dreary to full of hope
- 1 1 4. So let's read verses 8-12 - *By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. (V10) Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*
5. The debt of God's people demanded their death, but the suffering servant would come, He would bear their iniquities and He would offer Himself as a guilt offering, paying their debt

#### 1 C. So, it's no accident that Jesus often used debt language to describe his ministry

- 1 1 1. Even in the Lord's prayer, Jesus holds up forgiveness as God forgiving our debt to Him, Matthew 6:12 - *and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*
- 1 2. And, Jesus tells the famous story in Matthew 18:23-27- *"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.*
3. Now Jesus is using this illustration to show why His disciples should be forgiving people, but listen to the language with which He describes salvation: a debt was forgiven - and that's why Jesus came, to forgive the debt

#### 1 D. But, as the guilt offering taught them, that debt couldn't just be forgiven, it had to be paid

1. So Paul points at the cross and says, the debt was paid there - there was the greater guilt offering
- 1 2. Colossians 2:13-14 - *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*
3. Jesus came to forgive our debt to God, but that debt had to be paid by someone, and it was - it was paid by Jesus at the cross, at the cross our debt could be set aside because it was nailed to the cross and declared 'paid in full'
- 1 1 4. And Jesus, in His final words on the cross cried out, John 19:30 - *"It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*
5. That last cry is well translated, it does mean 'it is finished', but the Greek word there has several dimensions and one of its meanings is 'paid in full' - Jesus literally cried out, "Paid in full" as He drew His final breath, the debt had been paid, guilt had been satisfied, He had been offered as guilt for us and now we can walk away free

## ① IV. How does this apply to us?

### ① A. We need to recognize our indebtedness

1. The purpose of the guilt offering was to take those who recognized that they had a debt that they could not pay and provide a substitute for them - but there was an important first step, recognition
2. Like the Israelites, the first response is to recognize our guilt, to understand our indebtedness, to acknowledge that our sin has put us in debt to God and that debt is far beyond anything that we could ever think of repaying
3. We need to place ourselves, not only intellectually but emotionally as well, in the place of the debtor in Matthew 18, we need to recognize how great our debt is and realize our only option is to beg for mercy
4. We need to be the one humbled enough to really mean the words of the Lord's prayer - *forgive us our debts* - I am in debt, I can't pay, please forgive
5. That's the necessary first step in the Gospel - we need to understand well, to feel our desperate need for the Gospel and then we will come with the right heart to plead for mercy, to release us from our crushing debt

### ① B. But then we can rejoice because Christ paid our debt

1. This was the glorious promise of the guilt offering, the promise fulfilled in Christ and all who truly recognize their debt can come and take hold of this offering, they can point at the cross and say, "My debt was paid"
2. That ought to be our great joy - my debt was paid! - we'll hear and savor the words of Colossians 2:13-14 - *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*
3. We can say with confidence, "Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea" and we can walk out free, with great joy - rejoicing is the right response to the guilt offering

### ① C. But if Christ paid our debt, then we should be quick to cover others' debts as well

1. Almost every time the concept of the forgiven debt comes up in the New Testament, it's paired with a call to go out forgiving others' debts as well
- ① 2. The Lord's prayer holds out forgiveness of debt, but then calls for a forgiving attitude in response, Matthew 6:12-15 - *and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
- ① 3. Or the story in Matthew 18 ends with verses 32-35 - *Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.'*
4. If we have truly recognized our indebtedness and truly rejoiced in Christ's payment, then it will be impossible for us to hold debts against others - we will recognize that we have been forgiven a literally infinite debt, an unforgivable debt, against that background no debt against us has any meaning
5. We can freely release everyone who has wronged us, who owes us anything because even forgiving all of that we end up infinitely ahead
6. So if you are not a forgiving person, it demonstrates that you really don't understand your debt or Christ's payment, you haven't ever really felt how great your debt was or how glorious Christ's payment was - if you had you would be so quick to forgive
7. So, as we consider the great payment made on our behalf we should go out and be quick to set aside anything that has been done against us - we don't require payment because the debt has been paid