



A couple of weeks ago I fancied one of those lovely Mr Kipling sponge puddings for my dinner; my favourite being the cherry bakewell. The instructions were:- 'Place in the microwave for 30 seconds.' I pressed the '10 seconds' button three times then went into the living room to answer the 'phone. All at once there was smoke billowing into the living room and setting off the fire alarm. I rushed into the kitchen and could hardly see the microwave for the smoke puthering out of it. I quickly opened the door of the microwave – and the outside door! My lovely pudding was one black mass and the plastic container had all melted. Whatever had I done????? Simple answer – I had pressed the '10 minutes' button instead of the '10 seconds'! The smell was horrible and seemed to linger in the living room for days; I could even smell it upstairs in the bedrooms. Even though it is now two weeks ago, there is still a slight smell of burning plastic remaining in the kitchen.

When the Church needs a new cook for the Luncheon Club or café, I am sure that the Leadership will be extremely disappointed that I do not wish to be short-listed. Mind you, maybe if I send them a 'photo of my pudding.....

The smell of this event took my mind to the burnt offerings that were made at the temple. The altar for the offerings was outside in the temple courtyard, but I would think that it was almost certain that as the people worshipped inside the temple they would be able to smell the burning wood and animal flesh. As I write this it is nearly bonfire night and even with my doors and windows closed I will be able to smell the nearby bonfires and fireworks. I would hate to be sitting in a church that was full of smoke and the smell of burning animal flesh; a real breeding ground for covid as everyone would be coughing and spluttering!



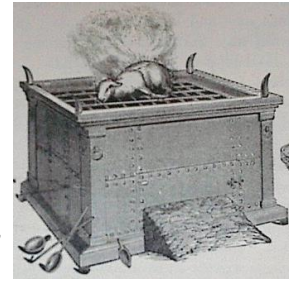
Why did they make burnt offerings? How long ago was this? We often connect burnt offerings with God giving Moses the rules and regulations about them, but in fact, the first burnt offering we read about in the Bible was made previously by Noah at the end of the flood.

Man throughout the ages and amongst all nationalities have felt it necessary to atone for their wrongdoings and have had different ways of doing this according to their customs and beliefs. Taking the base as the God whom we read about in our Bibles, burnt offerings was the method that God chose to give to the people through Moses, about 3,500 years ago. When the offerings were to be made, the type of offerings and how they were to be made were all very precisely detailed.



The various offerings were made according to the sort of sin that had been committed and also according to the wealth of the person making the offering. For the rich it would be a bull, for those less wealthy it would be a goat or a sheep and for the very poor it would be a turtle dove or pigeon.

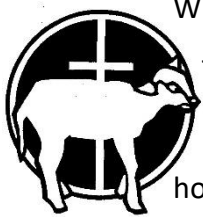
The altar, which was situated in the temple courtyard, was made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze. It measured about eight feet square and was about four and a half feet high so it was of considerable size. Only the men presented the offerings and it was on behalf of both themselves and their families. The man put his hand on the animal that was to be sacrificed so that the animal was identified with his wrongdoing/sin. As the animal was sacrificed, the burnt offering represented the taking away of any guilt.



Another thing that the offering would do would be the enabling of the man to have faith that God would completely forgive him and would restore a right relationship between them. It would be a re-commitment of his life to God. It was something that was personal for him and his family. Obviously one problem about making a burnt offering was that by its very nature it was repetitive and was something that had to keep being repeated over and over again.

If this is what God asked the people to do, why do we not make burnt offerings as part of our church services today? Now that would be interesting wouldn't it – How would you fancy bringing a bull or a lamb with you to church on a Sunday?

When Jesus came to the earth, His life was to be offered instead of the burnt offerings. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1: 29) The life of Jesus was offered once and for all for all of our wrongdoings, so unlike the burnt offerings, does not have to be repeated. Our sins go onto Jesus just as the sins used to be transferred onto the offered animals.



When the male animals were offered, they had to be perfect with no blemishes or marks.

Jesus exactly fitted that description, being the perfect sacrifice. I know that the death of

Jesus must have been dreadfully painful, but, in addition to that He took upon Himself

the wrongs of the whole world. This caused a total separation between Himself and a

holy God for a while and caused Him to say, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(Mark 16: 34) Surely that must have been even worse for Him to accept than any physical punishment that He received. I know that it is what Jesus did for me personally, but I do not think I am able to fully grasp the sacrifice that He made for me.

God accepted the death of Jesus on my behalf and this means that because of that acceptance I can have a right relationship with God. I can be assured that I am forgiven when I pray about things. I can be assured of God's faithfulness. I can be assured that He is always there for me, even through the tough times and I can be assured of being with Him for ever because of the perfect sacrifice that He has made.

He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own
He bore the burden to Calvary, and suffered and died alone.

How marvellous! How wonderful! And my song shall ever be,
How marvellous! How wonderful! Is my Saviour's love for me.

C.H.Gabriel