



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A RECONSIDERATION OF THE MEANING OF PEACE OFFERINGS

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ABSTRACT

The five representative offerings that appear in the Old Testament are burnt offering, meal offering, peace offerings, sin offering and compensate offering. Of the five great sacrifices, the peace offerings (*zebachselamim*) have two distinctive characters that cannot be found in other sacrifices. From the perspective of co-eating, the peace offerings was supposedly the favorite of many of the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Because it was a kind of feast for those who participated in the sacrifice after having sacrificed sacrifices to God and sharing the portion of the sacrifice happily. The common meals and co-ownership of the Early Church in the book of Acts are the active aspects of that fellowship. The purpose of this study is to examine the uses of the peace offerings in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, and to explore the true meaning of the peace offerings for our time. Modern Christianity and the church must continue to have the true meaning of peace offering even in times when the sacraments of the Bible are no longer necessary.

INTRODUCTION

The place where the peace offerings first appear in the Old Testament is immediately after Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Exo 20:24-25). God commanded that all the children of Israel should build earthen altar or untreated stones, and give peace offerings with sheep or cattle thereon. The specifications of an earthen altar and an altar of undressed stones has generally been taken as an indication of the antiquity of these instructions. What is more important, even if these instructions are quite old, is the statement that YHWH himself will choose the place where such altars are to be built and that he will come in person to his people assembled at these places and there bless them (Durham, *Exodus*, 1987, 319). Of the five representative sacraments of the Old Testament, this peace offerings have unique characteristics of common meals. All the other four sacrifices are expressed in singular, while the peace offerings are expressed in plural. This is because it has the meaning of peace of relationship between God and man. God and man's fellowship are restored through meals, each assigned a portion (Lee, "Five Offerings", 2010, 114). In the case of burnt offering, nothing is left because all the offerings are burned. And in the case of meal offering and sin offering, only a portion is burned, and the rest is eaten by priests or Aaron's offspring. But the one who participates in peace offerings eat the sacrifices with the family or those who participated in the sacrifice together.

They do not eat all the offerings. The organs with the oil are gathered together on the burnt offering, but the meat of the beast that was killed was devoured by the family or the congregation in the sanctuary. While the meat is eaten, the blood can not be eaten, and the oil is left to God (Lev 3:16-17). The oil burns to God, while the chest and hind legs are given to the priest (Lev 7:30-33). The rest is eaten by the people. It should be eaten in the chosen place not in any places (see Deut 12: 6-7, 11-12, 15-19, 26; see 1 Sam 3:4-4). Oil is regarded as the most precious part because it is where power is located and devoted to God. So the sacrifice of peace offerings is a symbolic expression of 'food to YHWH'(Lev 3:11). Perhaps the use of this term may be to emphasize that Jehovah himself shares food made from peace offerings with his sacrifice and his blood relatives(Hartley, *Leviticus 1-27*, 2005, 173). The name peace offerings means that the fellowship of God and man is accomplished or restored. It is for the *shalom* between God and man. Because it restores the broken relationship through assigning the oil to God and the meat to man. Therefore, the peace offerings is sometimes referred to as a meal of fellowship.

Hannah's Peace offerings

The story of Hannah, a woman of Ephraim, who was not able to bear a child at the end of the age of Judges, tells a moving story about the peace offerings. Hannah's husband Elkanah made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Israel, called Silo, every year. And there he gave the peace offerings to God. Hannah was crying as the whole family of Elkanah ate and drank. Elkanah asked Hannah why she did not eat. This is why

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Hannah was unable to participate in the peace offerings (1 Sam 1:8). After "eating and drinking" (after finishing the offerings), Hannah rose up alone and poured out her painful heart before God. It was a prayer accompanied by sad wailing (1 Sam 1:9). How passionate was Hannah's prayer! Eli, the priest, misunderstood her as a drunken woman and asked her to cut the wine (1 Sam 1:13-14). Hannah, who had a pain that even the priest could not recognize, had no other way but to pass on her sorrow to God with enthusiasm. Eli later understood Hannah's sorrow and earnest prayer and blessed her. Hannah received his blessing with gratitude and left the place and began to "eat". In the blessing of the priest, Hannah did not grieve again on her face. And she ate. What does it mean to say she ate? She was involved in the peace offerings. She was able to participate in the peace offerings. It was then that Hannah was able to come to the fellowship with true joy.

Hannah vowed to God in prayer: "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head." (1 Sam 1:11) She promised that if God heard her prayer and gave her a son, she would give him to God. For a lifetime that she would not put a rosary on his head was a vow to devote her son to God. Samuel was a Nazirite because his mother promised he would be one. His mother indicated his vocation prenatally (Klein, *1 Samuel*, 1983, 8). And Hannah kept the promise. After God gave Samuel, Hannah did not forget her promise. Samuel, one of Israel's greatest leaders, was the fruit of Hannah's peace offerings. Samuel grew up in Hannah's vow by sending his childhood before YJWH, "receiving favor from the Lord and men" (1 Sam 2:26). This verse reminds us of Jesus' childhood as the New Testament speaks (Lk 2:52). Hannah's prayer and peace offerings remind us not only of Jesus but also of many people: When Jacob left Laban's house and went to his brother's house, he remained alone in the side of the Jabbok and wrestled with God all night (Gen 32) and when Hezekiah got sick, he heard God's word "you will not live", he wept and prayed toward the wall of the palace. What they have in common is that they made a passionate prayer, not a proper prayer, for their desperate problems. Man's passionate prayer sometimes has the power to turn God's will. It is in the passionate prayer that the power to enable things that are not of man's power. Just as the faithful God listened to Hannah's prayer and opened the true peace offerings.

Shama and Peace offerings

The kingdom of Israel begins with Saul. The humility of Saul, who confessed himself to be "the weakest family in the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes of Israel" (1 Sam 9:21), did not last very long. He began to deteriorate. Not long after he became king, Saul began to lose the beautiful character he once had and made some mistakes. One of them was that he did not wait for the priest Samuel while preparing for the battle against the Philistines, and performed the sacrifice at random (1 Sam 13:8-10). In the second year of his reign Saul had gathered the people and dared to carry out the sacrifices. He prepared the burnt offering and the peace offerings, but Samuel arrived before the offerings. Because of this event, King Saul is eventually taken away from the king's place. The person who emphasized the order of faith (1 Sam 9: 7) had to fall down. Growth and maturity are different. Growth takes place even in short moments. But maturity requires a lot of time.

Maturity is sometimes obtained by paying the price of trials. Saul could not wait for the priest, Samuel, to break down the order of faith. No matter how hard it is, faith should live up to its name. It is a faith to be able to go even though it is difficult and long. Another mistake made by Saul arose after winning the battle in the battle with Amalek. Saul did not demolish the Amalekites and their possessions according to the command of God, but he left behind some valuable loot. Before the battle, God said, "Beat the Amalekites, and do not leave all their possessions, but destroy them" (1 Sam 15:3). Saul succumbed to battle in battle. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed (1 Sam 15:9). The following narrative is full of chaos between Saul and Samuel concerning this event (1 Sam 15:13,15,20-21). When Samuel reproved him, Saul said he had left it to offer to God. And he hastened to turn that responsibility on his own people. Samuel was furious at the naive excuse that a king of a nation was taking: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offering and sacrifices as much as in obeying (*shama*) the voice of the LORD? To obey (*shama*) is better than sacrifice, and to heed (*shama*) is better than the fat of rams." There is an important word emerging from Saul's excuse and Samuel's rebuke. It is *shama*. The Hebrew words for 'obey', 'heed' are all *shama*. The basic meaning of *shama* is 'hearing (the word of God)', but it goes a step further and means to live "obeying". The role of Saul is in hearing (1 Sam 15:1). There is no anointing without listening (Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 2010, 178). The fact that we hear the sermon as the Word of God is not merely a listener who has heard and is touched by the heart. *Shama* in the true sense means that when go to the world, we live in obedience to the remembrance of the Words given. Saul was abandoned by God because he could not *shama* to God's Word. When the function of the peace offerings is the restoration of the relationship with God, the restoration does not end with giving sacrifices. If we remember our words and obey them, we will say that true peace offerings are possible.

David's Peace offerings and the Ark

David, who set Jerusalem as the capital, succeeded in winning the first battle with the Philistines after he became king and brought the ark of God's covenant (= ark) to the capital. This work was of great significance. The ark of the covenant was made in the days when the Israelites wandered the wilderness for forty years after their exodus. It was a holy article containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments given through Moses (Exo 25:16,21) and a symbol of presence that God is with the people of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant, the most holy sacred gift, could only be carried carefully by the separated people. By the way, in the 1 Samuel chap.6, we see this Ark of the Covenant carried by animals. Israel, which was defeated in the battle against the Philistines, was stripped of the ark of the covenant. The Philistines carried the Ark of the Covenant up to Beth-Shemes with a new cart dragged by two sucking cows to confirm that the plague on them was caused by God (1 Sam 6). In 2 Samuel 6 we find the Ark of the Covenant carried back by the Israelites into the cart. After the death of Uzzah, David, fearing YHWH, hesitated to bring the ark of the covenant into his city Jerusalem, and moved to the house of Obed-Edom a Philistine, saying, "How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?" David, who stayed in Jerusalem for three months, wondered about the Ark of the Covenant and

heard that the house of Obed-edom was blessed by the ark of the covenant. David again began to move the ark of God. The former joy was restored, and the way of moving the ark of the covenant changed. The ark of the covenant of God was no longer in the cart, and people carried it away. While the Ark of the Covenant was being transported, praise was called, and the praise was added to the dance. David succeeded in laying down the Ark of the Covenant in the place he had prepared beforehand, and soon he gave the delightful burnt offering and peace offerings before the LORD (2 Sam 6:17). Just as the transfer of the ark began with a sacrifice so also it concluded with an unspecified number of offerings. The ark narrative ends with the distribution of food which was not the usual daily fare (Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 1989, 106-107). When the Levites could not bear their responsibilities and roles, the symbol of God's presence had to call out Uzzah's death, but God's presence became the greatest joy to Israel when the king and the priests united and honored the Word. And the true peace offerings with which the relationship with the broken relation with God was restored could be offered.

Hezekiah's Passover and Peace offerings

Hezekiah, the thirteenth king of Judah (c. 715-687 B.C.), is regarded as a good King with Josiah (2 Kgs 18:5). By 710 BCE Hezekiah had broken off relations with the Assyrian Empire and was preparing for a major reformation. He prayed again that God, who saved Israel from Egypt, would save the kingdom of Judah from Assyria, and sacrificed the Passover and offered peace offerings. In Hezekiah's reformation, the feast of the Passover and the sacrifice of peace offerings are important (2 Chr 30:22; 33:16). Christians will think of another pleasant feast meal in the sanctified God's house (Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 2005, 389). If the Passover is a season to remember God who saved from Egypt, peace offerings have the meaning of sacrifice for the restoration of relationship with God. He expected God to save him from Assyria this time. The Chroniclers have drawn Hezekiah as a restorer of broken worship and a model of absolute faith. In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah, who was at the age of twenty-five years, opened and sanctified YHWH's temple and set all the worship and life according to the word of God. For this, the temple of YHWH was restored and sanctified, and the priests and the Levites were brought together to offer offerings and to repatriate the temple officially (2 Chr 29). The Passover festival, which had been severed for a long time, was also restored. Originally the Passover Festival began with grazing sheep and ended with a seven-day unleavened bread festival, but the Passover renewal of Hezekiah was so successful that the entire congregation of Judah extended the Passover festival a week with joy.

Chroniclers say that there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30:26). The "great joy" found in Hezekiah's time, it was the joy of the true peace offerings that the blessing of the priest for the people and the prayer sound to the heavens that the relationship with God was restored.

Conclusion

Though the word peace offerings does not appear in the New Testament, the peace offerings tradition led to the common meal of the early church. Christians in the early church formed communities that fellowship, eat together, and pray for each other (Acts 2:42). Every day they tried to gather together in the temple, eating together at home, eating with joy and sincerity (Acts 2:46). Eating together means sacrament. This sacrament was still being done within the framework of co-eating. By doing so they were fulfilling the purpose of peace offerings. What we can tell from 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is that the Lord's Supper was celebrated when believers gathered together for fellowship at meal time. Joining bread and wine was an act of experiencing Christ's presence. It is similar to the way God is with those who eat festive food from the peace offerings (John E. Hartley, 176). The sacrifices of the Old Testament are no longer kept in the Church today. It is because we can not worship with cattle, sheep, goats, or pigeons. But until now, peace offerings are in the church and in our lives. For the living Christ is still a peace offerings. Because Christ is a fellowship offering for us and for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). In the world strangled with divisions and strife, the relationship between God and man, the relationship between man and man, and the relationship between man and nature are the true means of reconciliation in which Christians and churches in our day must be restored.

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