Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Picture this: A man with a wedding ring (so a married man) is in a flower store buying a bunch of red roses. What would be your guess be as to why he is doing that? And if you are thinking that he has goofed up and is trying to say, ‘Sorry,’ you are thinking what most people would think, apparently. I even found one website that explains the meaning behind how many roses you buy. And if you are saying, ‘Sorry,’ then apparently that requires 15 roses. 1 means ‘you’re the one,’ 10 means ‘you’re perfect,’ and 21 means dedication. So as you can see, there is all sorts of room for misunderstanding between what he meant with the roses and how she interpreted the gift of roses. It truly is a complex mystery. But brothers, on behalf of the wife’s union, I have been asked to encourage you to figure the mystery out ☺

Well, in a similar vein, there is a good chance that having read chapter 2, you are wondering: What did the grain offering mean? And we know now that all of the ceremonies and sacrifices of the OT pointed forward to and were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. But how did *this* offering do that? And also, what relevance, if any, could it possibly have for us as New Testament believers today? Well, these are the things we want to think about as we consider the second of the five offerings at the beginning of Leviticus – the grain offering.

And if we were to pick one theme for this offering, it would be that **the grain offering is about thankfulness for Christ and His blessings**. So let’s explore that together as we consider the **detail**, the **Method**, the **meaning**, and the **relevance** of the grain offering.

1. So we begin with the **Details** of the grain offering. Does anyone here enjoy reading cooking instructions? I’m guessing not. We usually read cooking instructions because we have to cook something and we want to do it properly. Well, in a similar vein, chapter 2 is not ‘fun reading’; it is offering instructions so the worshipper got the offering right.
   1. So there were three types of grain offering that you could present:
      1. The first was the offering of **uncooked** grain (vv1-3). You would crush the grain into a fine flour, and pour some oil and incense on it, so it cooked well and smelled nice while it was burning on the altar.
      2. The second was the offering of **cooked** grain (vv4-10). Once again, you crushed the grain into a fine flour, but then you would cook it at home one of three ways:
         1. *Baked* in an oven as little loaves or wafers that had oil on or in them,
         2. *Fried* on a griddle as a flat cake, and then broken into bits and smeared with oil,
         3. Or mixed with oil and *cooked* in a pan or pot.
      3. The third grain offering was the **firstfruits** (vv14-16). And while the offering of uncooked or cooked grain could be presented any time of the year, the firstfruits offering belonged to harvest time. When the wheat of barley crop started to ripen, you would take some of the first and best stalks, remove the grain, crush it, and add oil and incense.
      4. So the three types of offering were uncooked, cooked, or uncooked firstfruits.
   2. And there are already two ways that this offering points us to Jesus Christ:
      1. What did you have to do to the grain before you added oil and incense or cooked it? You had to **crush** it into fine flour. Well, listen to what **Isaiah 53:5** says about Jesus, “*He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed*.” And you will remember that He had a crown of thorns pressed on His head. And He was whipped in such a way that chunks of flesh were removed and bone and tissue were laid bare. And He was so ‘crushed’ by all this that He could not carry His own cross. So even what was done to this grain foreshadowed what would be done to Jesus, in order for Him to be the Saviour that we sinners need.
      2. And **1 Cor. 15** also describes Jesus as the “**firstfruits**” of resurrection. So just as He rose from the dead and lives, eternally, in heaven, so shall all who have believed in Him as their Saviour rise from the dead and live in heaven!
2. So that’s the *detail* of the grain offering. Let’s turn our attention, secondly, to the **Method** of the grain offering.
   1. And I didn’t mention this when we looked at the burnt offering, but **the priests** offered a lamb as a burnt offering to the Lord, every morning and every evening, every day. And after each burnt offering, they would also offer a grain offering. So there were two, daily, grain offerings, burned on the altar, by the priests (Leviticus 6).
   2. But in terms of the grain offering **of the people**, it too, like the burnt offering, was a **voluntary** offering; it was not required on a set date or occasion; it was just brought to the tabernacle when the worshipper chose to present this offering. Typically though, it came to be associated with the burnt offering. So people would present a burnt offering and a grain offering.
      1. And one example of someone in the Bible who did this is **Hannah**. Boys and girls, who was Hannah the mother of? Samuel. Hannah was married to Elkanah. And we are told that Elkanah would take his family and go to the Tabernacle every year to sacrifice to the Lord. And this may well have been what your average family did – an annual trip to the tabernacle to offer sacrifices. And you will remember that Hannah was unable to have a baby for a long time. And one year she made a vow that if the Lord would give her a son, she would dedicate her son to the Lord’s service. And God answered her prayer and gave her Samuel. And here is what we read in **1 Samuel 1:24**: “*When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, [and] an ephah of flour … and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh … Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli*.” So Hannah presented a burnt offering followed by a grain offering. And this appears to be what was the typical custom of Israelite worshippers.
   3. But note also the specific **negative and positive commands** about the method of this offering in vv11-13: Negatively*,* there was to be no leaven (yeast) or honey in the grain offerings. And honey probably means the nectar of the wheat flowers. It all had to be cleaned off. But positively, you had to add salt to every grain offering.
   4. So putting this all together: After making sure there was no honey on the grain, and after crushing it to flour, and after adding oil and incense, and seasoning it with salt, you would cook it if you were presenting a cooked offering, and then take your uncooked or cooked or firstfruits grain offering to the priest at the tabernacle courtyard. And he would burn a portion of it on the altar “*as a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord*.” This was the method of the grain offering. And note the grain offering, like the burnt offering, was a “*pleasing aroma to the Lord*.” It was a sweet smell that rose up to heaven. And this was not because God enjoyed the daily smell of roast meat or incense, but because those who offered this offering, in faith, believed God’s promises about Messiah. **Ephesians 5:2** says, “*Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*.” So that His Old Testament people looked forward to Jesus and that we look back at who Jesus is and what He did on the cross as the heart of our salvation is what pleases the Father.
3. So now, as our third point, we need to consider the **meaning** behind all of this grain offering detail and method.
   1. And what we said earlier about the grain offering *following* the burnt offering helps us to understand the meaning. The burnt offering, as we saw last week, was about acceptance. It was because the worshiper presented a substitute sacrifice, which died in his or her place, and looked forward in faith to the promised Messiah, that he or she became acceptable to God. And now that the worshiper was acceptable to God, he or she would present this grain offering **as an expression of thankfulness and dedication**. So with this offering, the worshiper was saying, ‘Thank you, Lord! for forgiving my sin and for every other blessing you have sent me. I now rededicate myself to you and to your law.’
      1. And this is where we return to what was said earlier about **no leaven or honey and the need to add salt**.
         1. You see, leaven and honey caused fermentation, which is about decay and corruption.
            1. Have you boys and girls ever made bread? If you have, you will know that you have to add yeast and when you do the mixture it rises. But the yeast also makes the mixture go off and become sour more quickly than it would have without the yeast. And honey or nectar does this also; it makes the mixture turn sour more quickly.
            2. And we are going to see later in Leviticus that **nothing that had the hint of corruption or decay or death or uncleanness could come near God’s presence**. So that is why there was to be no leaven or honey in the offering.
         2. And the reason for adding salt, as v13 explains, is that it is the symbol of “*the covenant with your God*.*”* So to add salt was a reminder that God would never forsake the worshiper and that the worshiper had a duty to obey the law of the covenant law, while trusting in God’s promises about Messiah. So every time this offering was made, the worshipper was reminded of God’s faithfulness and rededicating himself or herself to obey the law, out of thankfulness for being forgiven.
   2. But before we move on to the relevance of all of this for us as New Testament believers, there is one more aspect of the grain offering that we should note. We see it in verses 3&10. There we read, “*But the rest of the grain offering* ***shall be for Aaron and his sons****; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings*.”
      1. So here is a memory test for you all: With the burnt offering, the whole animal was to be burned except for one part. Do you remember what part that was? **The skin**. And it is not spelled out, explicitly, in chapter 1, but from elsewhere in the Bible and non-biblical Jewish sources we know that the skin was given to the priest as a kind of payment for his work; he would sell it as income for himself and his family.
      2. Well, with the grain offering, after a portion of it was burned on the altar as a food offering to the Lord, the rest was for the priest to eat and enjoy. That is what verses 3&10 are describing. But because it is described as “*a most holy part of the Lord’s food offerings*,” it was only eaten by the priest, and it had to be eaten in the tabernacle courtyard; he couldn’t take it home and share it with his family. Next week, we will see that the priest could take some of the peace offering meat home to share with his family. But these were ways that the priests were looked after by the Lord’s people.
4. So now, fourthly and lastly, we can consider the **relevance** of all that we have learned about the grain offering for us as New Testament believers today.
   1. And we begin by recalling what we said earlier about **Christ** as the one who was ‘crushed’ for our sins, and who is the firstfruits of the resurrection, and who is the fragrant offering and sacrifice that truly pleases the Lord. So the grain offering directs us to put our trust for salvation entirely in Jesus. Do you trust in Christ alone for your salvation? Will you do that today?

* 1. But we also saw that the grain offering was presented *after* the burnt offering as a reminder of God’s faithfulness and a rededication of the worshiper to obedience out of thankfulness for being forgiven. And this is why we read **Romans 12** earlier in the service.
     1. Chapters 1-11 of Romans are a celebration of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as the basis of our salvation; it is because of Christ that God declares us justified, which means – just-as-if-I-never sinned. So He put our sin on Christ and He put the righteousness or perfection of Christ on us. And we receive this when we believe in Him as Saviour and Lord. That is what is explored in the first 11 chapters of Romans.
     2. So listen to how chapter 12 begins again: “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship*.” So Paul’s appeal is that out of thankfulness for the mercy that God has shown us in Jesus (burnt offering) we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices (grain offering).
        1. So our obedience is not about *earning* God’s favour but because He *has* shown us His favour in Christ. All of the things that we read about in Romans 12 – the command not to be like the world but to study the Bible so that your thinking and talking and behaving becomes more and more like Christ, and the command to use your gifts to bless others, and the command to be genuine in the way you love others and to hate evil, and the command to be patient with others and to show hospitality, and the command to be constant in prayer and to bless those who persecute you, and the commands of chapter 13 that you be subject to governing authorities and avoid drunkenness and sexual immorality and quarreling, these things are things that you must do because of God’s grace to you in Christ.
        2. It is our practice during our Sunday morning services to read a portion of God’s law, to confess our sins, and to hear the gospel of forgiveness in Christ. And we could call this the New Testament believer’s ‘grain offering.’
           1. We are reminded, again, of God’s faithfulness in salvation.
           2. And we examine ourselves for ‘leaven’ or ‘honey’; the sin that clings to us and corrupts us, and we confess it before the Lord.
           3. And out of thankfulness for being forgiven, we rededicate ourselves to obedience. We want our lives to be salty – seasoned with what is good and right in the Lord’s eyes and what will bless and build up others.
           4. And we do all of this recognizing that Jesus Christ is our covenant keeper; it is His obedience that has secured our acceptance in God’s eyes.
  2. And then, finally, in terms of the relevance of the grain offering for us as New Testament believers: We saw also that a part of the grain offering **was given to the priests as ‘payment’ for their ministry.** And this very thing is the reason that Paul gives in **1 Corinthians 9:13** for why New Testament believers should pay ministers: He says, “*Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel*.” And so, in the letter of call that our Reformed Churches send to ministers, it is stated that the congregation “will provide for you in such a way that you are free to pursue your work in the church without the need to secure secular work outside of your calling.” We have agreed as churches that our ministers should be full-time preparing sermons and praying and teaching. So when we present our tithes and offerings in the worship services, it is a New Testament ‘grain offering’ act of obedience, again, out of thankfulness for Christ and His blessings. One commentator said, “As Christians we offer up ourselves when we present our monetary gifts to the Lord as an act of commitment to the Saviour. Giving is not incidental to Christian living but a core value in the life of a devoted disciple of Christ. There is no legitimate claim to commitment if there is no costly consecration to God.”

So the grain offering does have relevance for us as New Testament believers. It points us to Christ as our Saviour and the firstfruits of the resurrection, and it prompts us toward a thankful and sacrificial obedience. May God be praised for the gospel in the grain offering. Amen.