

An Old Testament bible study on the offerings (Leviticus 1-7):

In these seven chapters five offerings are of significance, forming the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, rituals and observances. They are the *Burnt offer*, the *Food offer*, the *Sin offer* and the *Trespass offer*. We all know that these sacrifices were being fulfilled in Christ, but how and to what extent not many know? The problem with not knowing them, in their Old Testament context, is to read the New Testament into them, or, even worse, our present day theological perspective. The Bible of the New Testament was the Old Testament and, to do that, is thus is to inscribe a foreign meaning to them. Let's look at two of these foreign meanings:

1. The first one is that every time an Israelite sinned he or she had to bring an offer to atone for this sin. That was not the case. None of these five offers were given for the atonement of known sins. They were there for the atonement of unknown sins. The only exception, to a certain degree, was the trespass offering after touching an unclean object or lying about a deposit etc. Breaking one of the ten commandments could not be rectified with an offer, only by grace. When David sinned with Bathsheba, after killing her husband Uriah in 2Samuel 11, it was only the grace of God that atoned his sin and not a sacrifice. If a sacrifice could atone for known sins, what grace is at stake since God got what He wanted? That brings us to the second foreign meaning.
2. At every offer the priest, or the one bringing the sacrifice, had put his or her hand on the head of the animal. The foreign meaning is that the sins of the nation, priest, or the one bringing the sacrifice were being carried over on the animal. In that case it meant the animal was being slaughtered and punished for the sin the one sacrificing should have received. Again, what grace is in this forgiveness of sin? If God got His revenge, or got rid of His anger, what grace is it to forgive the sin? The sin was then punished. Should a naughty boy steal \$50 from me and spend it, after which his dad gives it back when it comes to light. What grace is it from my side? I got my \$50 back. It is rather grace from the dad's side, since he got nothing for it. To reason in this foreign meaning is to have a distorted picture of God; an angry and revengeful God who don't show mercy except when an animal suffers. This is a bloodthirsty God, who more looks like a vampire than a God who is love.

What happened then at the sacrifices?

1. The significance of the one sacrificing, putting his or her hand on the head of the animal, was not the transfer of sin, but the transfer of the offerer self. What this meant was that the one sacrificing became one with the animal and was thus slaughtered and dedicated to God,

when the animal was slaughtered and dedicated to God. This has the direct meaning of what happened with us at salvation. In short, at salvation we placed our hands on Jesus' head and we died with Him and rose from the dead with Him, we became one with Him (He didn't do it in our place, He did it for us – representing us):

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection (Romans 6:4-5 NIV).

2. The most significant offer was the burned offering and was the one working the atonement, maintaining a living relationship with God. The call to this offer is what Paul calls reconciliation (2Corinthians 5:18). The burned offering was the only offering where everything of the animal was placed on the altar, nothing could be kept for e.g. the priestly diet. This communicates the full-surrender necessary in salvation. God wants everything on the altar, or nothing. The other aspect of this offering was that it had to be kept burning 24/7. A genuine full-surrender is 24/7. This is the offer Paul calls us to bring in Romans 12:1:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life - and place it [all] before God as an offering... (The Message)

3. The other offerings supplemented the burned offering, but none was so important.

Driving it home:

1. Are you excusing sin, because you think Jesus' sacrifice covers even deliberate and persistent sins? (Read Romans 6:1-11 and 1John 3)
2. Are you all on the altar? Your time and money and ambitions and desires and future etc.?