

A Sweet Savor to God

Key Verse: “His inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.”
—***Leviticus 1:9***

Selected Scripture:
Leviticus 1:1-17

THE SYMBOLISM SHOWN

by the sense of smell is used in the Scriptures to convey the thought of sacrifice and devotion. In Ephesians 5:2, the apostle says, “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” By this language, Paul takes our minds back to the services of Israel’s Tabernacle where, in connection with its ceremonies, incense was burned upon the Golden Altar in the Holy compartment, the odor of

which penetrated beyond the second veil into the Most Holy. The instructions for this act stated that there was to be “perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.”—Exod. 30:1-8

The directives governing the services of the Tabernacle were very exact. On Israel’s Day of Atonement, Aaron, the high priest, took the blood of the sin-offering sacrifices into the Most Holy to sprinkle upon the mercy seat. Prior to doing this, however, it was necessary that incense first be burned at the Golden Altar in order that its smoke and odor penetrate the Most Holy prior to Aaron passing under the veil. If this was not done, he would die as he entered the Most Holy. (Lev. 16:11-14)

The smoke and odor of the burning incense was evidence that the sacrificial work had been properly carried out and was acceptable to God.

Animal sacrifices that were burnt on the Brazen Altar were also considered as a “sweet savour unto the LORD,” as shown in our Key Verse and its context. (Lev. 1:5-9) Meat, or grain, offerings, when burnt upon the altar according to the Lord’s instructions, were similarly deemed a “sweet savour.”—Lev. 2:1-9

The foregoing ceremonies of Israel that were considered a “sweet savor” all pointed in various ways to Jesus’ ministry, obedience, and sacrifice, which ascended to God as a “sweetsmelling savour.” (Eph. 5:2) Consecrated followers of the Master are also invited to sacrifice and to be baptized into Jesus’ death. (Rom. 12:1; 6:3,4) The Christian’s work of sacrifice is directed particularly on behalf of fellow members of the “body of Christ.”—I Cor. 12:12-14,27

In Philippians 4:18, the Apostle Paul, alluding to the evidence of sacrifice on the part of the church at Philippi in sending him a gift while in prison at Rome, refers to it as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” Here we have the authority of Paul himself for applying the lessons of Israel’s Tabernacle to the church. It shows, furthermore, that God is testing the sincerity of our dedication to him by the wholeheartedness of our sacrifice and service towards one another.

The symbolism of the sense of smell should help enable us to discern between true devotion to God and mere lip service. Where we can detect no “odor” of sacrifice, we may well wonder how deeply the Truth has taken hold of our spiritual life. Our vision of Truth should reveal the privilege of sacrifice and service on behalf of others, and our heart devotion to the Lord should make us quick to lay down our lives that others may be blessed. Thus, the sweet odor of our devotion will be strong.—John 15:13; I John 4:7-11