

26 And all its fat he shall offer up in smoke on the altar as in the case of the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

27 How if anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, and becomes guilty,

28 If his sin, which he has committed is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without defect, for his sin which he has committed.

29 And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and slay the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering.

32 But if he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring it, a female without defect.

35 Then he (the anointed priest) shall remove all its fat, just as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offerings, and the priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar, on the offerings by fire to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven."

In the above passage some significant things are learned:

- (1) It is possible to sin in ignorance i.e., while one is ignorant that what he or she is doing is in fact sin. In verses 2, 22, and 27 we read of persons sinning unintentionally and in verses 14, 23, and 28 we read of a sin becoming known to the person(s) involved.
- (2) Sins of ignorance need not be done intentionally i.e., with deliberate purpose or intention; failure to fulfill the commands of God's law, whether intentional or not, is sin.
- (3) Sins of ignorance make a person legally, objectively guilty, whether or not the person has any feeling of subjective guilt of blameworthiness.
- (4) Sins of ignorance require confession of and identification with sin.
- (5) Sins of Ignorance require a sacrifice for their atonement.
- (6) Sins of ignorance need forgiveness from the Lord.

These considerations raise serious questions about any definition of sin that requires willful disobedience or "voluntary transgression of known law".

### C. A Definition of Sin

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* defines sin as "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature."