

## DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Twenty-Eighth Week - Thursday

### TABERNACLE ABOMINATIONS

*"Now the sons of Eli were corrupt, they did not know Yahweh. And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or cauldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, 'Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw.' And if the man said to him, 'They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires,' he would then answer him, 'No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force.' Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before Yahweh, for men abhorred the offering of Yahweh" (1 Samuel 2:12-17).*

The sons of Eli were "men of Belial," that is, men of profligate disposition and conduct, men who had no regard for their own character or for the honor of God, whose commissioned servants they were. This attitude was not limited to the particulars of our text alone, but pervaded their whole demeanor.

The custom of sacrifice was that burnt offerings were wholly consumed by fire upon the altar; sin offerings were eaten by the priests. But in the case of peace offerings, the internal fat alone was first to be consumed upon the altar and then the priest had for his share the breast and the shoulder. The remainder of the carcass was returned to the offerer to be eaten by himself and his friends, or such as he invited. This allowed ample portions for the priest, who had the whole of the sin offerings and some principal parts of the peace offerings.

But Eli's sons did not think so. Not satisfied with the breast and shoulder of every victim, they begrudged the offerer the remainder. At length they introduced the custom that while the meat was boiling for the offerer and his family, a servant was sent round "with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand." This utensil, which no doubt had the prongs wide apart, was thrust into the boiler, and whatever it brought up was demanded by the priest as an additional portion for him. The natural consequence was that there was a serious reduction of that portion which the offerers used to entertain their friends and of which they extended food to the needy.

Yet even this was not enough to satisfy their greed. Having found they could make the people submit to their demands, they now went further and demanded raw meat. That is, after the breast and shoulder had been given to them but before the remainder had been put to boil for the offerer, the servant came and demanded the raw meat, alleging that the priests did not want it boiled but roasted. The reason for this was probably because the three-pronged fork, striking somewhat at random into the kettle, did not always bring up the choicest portions. And in order to secure this choicest portion and prevent all evasion, they demanded the raw meat be given them even before the fat, which belonged to God, was offered upon the altar; in other words, their greedy demand was to be satisfied *before* offering to the Lord His portion.

The people could not help but feel the evil in this proceeding, and the manner in which they met it is in all respects praiseworthy. They were more concerned for the honor and glory of God than were His own ministers. They implored the sons of Eli that the Lord's offerings be first presented, and then, "take as much as your heart desires." What was the response to this becoming remonstrance and handsome offer? "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force."

It is no wonder, then, that the people now abstained from bringing their peace offerings to the altar. "Therefore," we are told, "the sin of the young men [sons of Eli] was very great before the LORD, for men [offerers] abhorred the offering of the LORD." This was the offense of the sons of Eli; and a very terrible one it was, amounting to a betrayal of the high trusts committed to their care.