

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-05-10a

This is Sunday, the 10th of May, 2015. We begin a study this morning that I have entitled, Christ in the Sacrifices. This is a study of animal sacrifice as it is portrayed in the Bible, throughout the Bible.

You find sacrifice from Genesis to Revelation. So, it is helpful for us to have a good grip on its meaning, on its typology, not just in general, but specifically. The Bible gives many details of the ritual of animal sacrifice.

This, by the way, is a much maligned notion in the modern day. And as you know, the more something is maligned, the more I want to study it and bring it to the fore. So, we begin the study this morning.

We'll open it as is our custom by spending a moment in prayer. It gives us the opportunity to go before the Lord and dedicate our time and our concentration to Him and ask His blessing on our fellowship. Shall we pray? Father, how grateful we are for the grace that You bestow on us on a daily basis.

You have said in Your Word that the rain falls on the just and the unjust. And as we enjoy the rain and the relief from the lack of it that we have had over a time spanning years, we're grateful. We're grateful for Your perfect understanding of what is best in our limited and short-term vision.

We don't always appreciate the larger work that You are accomplishing, but we trust in Your wisdom. We trust in Your grace. We trust You as our Heavenly Father and the knowledge that in the Lord Jesus Christ we are the heirs and beneficiaries of Your love and Your compassion, Your mercy, and Your beneficial working in our lives.

We thank You for the opportunity to spend this time together receiving blessing and hopefully being a blessing to one another as we fellowship and as we encourage each other, as we remember our identity in the Lord Jesus, our opportunity as His representatives on this earth, and the privilege that we have of reflecting Your glory and looking forward to the day when we will be in realms where the light and the access to Your presence are a constant and visible manifestation of Your grace. We pray that as we embark on this study and as we continue it that You will be with us, that Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher and instruct us in the way of truth in a way that's not only informational but is meaningful and helpful to us as we try to live our lives to please You. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. As we think about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, that work is, in an objective view, shocking. And this is something that is pointed out by unbelievers on a regular basis because essentially at the heart of your Christian faith is human sacrifice.

We look at the Aztecs and we look at some of the other barbaric peoples that have taken people

and slain them to propitiate some god somewhere and we say, that's awful, that's horrible, that's shocking. Well, that's basically the crux of the Christian faith. That was for Dan's benefit.

It's at the heart of the Christian faith. It's at the very center. What is the symbol of Christianity? It is the cross.

And what happened on the cross? A man was slain to propitiate a god. Well, we have been in for a lot of criticism and outright abuse from the world because of this. Let me read you just a typical example.

This is from one of my favorite websites. We get things now from the web so we don't have to buy people's books and actually put money in their pockets when we disagree with them. I used to buy bad commentaries and my only reservation was, well, I'm actually funding this guy to continue his work.

So I like going to naysayer websites because I don't compensate them in any way and yet I can digest their ideas and hopefully be improved thereby. So this is one of my favorite go-to websites. This is WhyWontGodHealAmputees.com. WhyWontGodHealAmputees.com. This is chapter 14 of our source called *Why Does God Love Animal Sacrifice?* We're about to study animal sacrifice.

Let's just get a clinical scientific view. His previous chapter was on slavery and he's gotten quite into the hand-flapping mode over slavery. So he says, For most people the last chapter offers sufficient evidence to prove to themselves that God did not write the Bible.

Clearly an all-loving God cannot be a huge proponent of slavery. Therefore, since the Bible specifies that slavery is perfectly acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, it is easy to conclude that primitive men wrote the Bible rather than God. However, if you need additional evidence, then we can approach the Bible from another angle and reach the same conclusion.

To any normal human being, I just want to pause and let that sink in. To any normal human being, the idea of animal and human sacrifice is both abhorrent and nauseating. The dictionary defines sacrifice in this way, the act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or a person.

Just so we're clear on what we're talking about. This quite clearly is something that primitive savages would do. There is no need to beat around the bush.

We all know without question that animal and human sacrifice is an absurdity. Sacrificing and burning an animal on an altar does not have any beneficial effect for anyone. The Aztecs in Mexico would take a virgin to the top of a pyramid, slice her still-beating heart out of her chest, and eat it or whatever.

And we all know that their practices were insane and barbaric beyond belief. The death of the virgin did absolutely nothing to improve crop yield or rainfall, nor did it, quote, appease the

Aztec gods. Since those gods were completely imaginary, it is impossible to understand why the Aztecs would do something so bizarre and disgusting.

Was it mass delusion? Rampant superstition taken to the nth degree? Total desperation? A horrific combination? There is no way to know, but we do know that the behavior of the Aztecs was insane. Any normal person is disgusted by religious sacrifice, and you would imagine that God is too. Ritual slaughter like this has nothing to do with an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, prayer-answering creator of the universe.

The idea of killing an animal, splattering its blood about, and then burning its flesh is, quite obviously, absurd and ridiculous. God would have nothing to do with animal sacrifice. But then we examine the Bible, the Holy Word of God, and the single authoritative source of all information about Jesus, and find passages like these.

And then He goes to Leviticus 1, and pretty much quotes the first 12 or 15 verses, which closes with the bird offerings. The priest removes the head, burns it on the altar, its blood is drained on the side of the altar, removes the crop with the contents, throws it to the east side of the altar with the ashes, tears it open by the wings, not severing it completely, and then the priest burns it on the wood that is on the fire in the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

Burning bird is an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Burning flesh is an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Does this make any sense to you as a rational human being? Leviticus chapter 5, and then He goes and quotes a goodly chunk of that.

When anyone is guilty, he must confess that he has sinned. He brings a female lamb. If he can't bring a lamb, two pigeons, the blood, the severing.

It is a sin offering. The priest offers another one. Atonement for him for the sin he has committed.

He will be forgiven. You are an intelligent human being, so think this through. Here is the logic expressed in Leviticus chapter 5. This is a paraphrase.

This is his synthesis of Leviticus chapter 5. Today I accidentally touched something that was ceremonially unclean and I didn't know about it at the time, but fortunately a priest brought it to my attention and I am guilty. Now I can't afford a lamb, but I can get two young pigeons for a shekel over at Saul's bird emporium, and I can take both of them to the priest. He will wring the head from the neck of one of them, but not sever it completely, and he will sprinkle the blood and drain the rest, and then the priest will burn the other pigeon.

Then I am forgiven. Thank God. What does your common sense tell you about this? It probably tells you that it is impossible to imagine an all-loving, all-knowing God demanding this, and you are correct.

Here is another example, and it goes to Leviticus chapter 7, the priest's share. Anyone who brings a fellowship offering, brings part of it as a sacrifice to the Lord. The priest burns the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons.

Give the right thigh of your fellowship offering to the priest as a contribution. The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering shall have the right thigh as his share. From the fellowship offerings of the Israelites I have taken the breast that is waved, and the thigh that is presented, and have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as their regular share from the Israelites.

This is our commentator. Does it seem more likely that God commanded this, or that primitive men looking for the priest's share wrote this? Here is another example. It goes to Leviticus 9. We have Moses putting the blood of a freshly slaughtered animal on the ears, thumbs, and toes of other people.

What does your common sense tell you about these passages? When looking at passages like these in the Bible, everyone can see the problem. Animal sacrifice is abhorrent, and it has nothing to do with an all-knowing and all-loving God. For most people, no further evidence is needed.

It is obvious that primitive men wrote the Bible, not God. God would have nothing to do with the Bible if these passages are in it and the Bible is an all-or-nothing book. No all-powerful, all-loving God wants people to kill animals, splatter their blood, cut them into pieces, arrange the pieces on an altar, and burn them so that He can, quote, smell the pleasing aroma.

There is no difference between the Bible's book of Leviticus and the insanity of the Aztecs. Okay? That's what normal, rational people... Of course, you are obviously not in that group. And then he has a second section on human sacrifice.

If you are a Christian, how do you handle these passages in the Bible? A Christian has a problem because it is hard to put faith in a book that harbors numerous passages where God demands animal sacrifice. As with the slavery problem discussed in the previous chapter, there are two possible approaches for a Christian. Two and only two.

Be sure and pick from one of the next two options. One, pretend that the passages are not there and change the subject when they are mentioned. Number two, try to develop some sort of highly convoluted rationalization on God's behalf to explain the passages.

Hands for number one, pretend they are not there. Hands for number two, let's develop a highly convoluted rationalization on God's behalf. He hasn't given us one, so we'll invent one.

By the way, on some other occasion, if I were going to teach a short course on fallacies, this would be a great piece of writing. We have already seen about seven of the classic fallacies in here already. By name, I can demonstrate them, but we'll let him have his say.

Christians tend to take the latter approach, highly convoluted rationalization, and then try to do something quite unexpected. You would imagine that Christians would try to distance themselves as far as possible from animal sacrifice, but they do not. Surprisingly, many Christians embrace these parts of the Bible.

Only in the context of this abhorrent practice does the horrific death of Jesus on the cross, as portrayed in the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, make even a modicum of sense. For Christians, the human race had to actually move into the realm of human sacrifice to finally appease their God. Senselessly killing animals was not sufficient.

According to the Christian faith, Jesus is the human sacrifice that satisfies God. For example, here is something that a Christian minister might say. Pretend I'm a Christian minister.

If you read all those dry regulations for sin sacrifices in Leviticus, and if you read about the requirements for the Passover lamb, you will realize that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for sin. He is the firstborn son, not of a sheep or a goat, but of God. He is innocent of all sin.

He volunteers of His own free will. That is, He was convicted only by His own confession. He freely submitted to His Father's will.

He is, by Levitical code, a perfect sacrifice, and therefore He perfectly removes all sin. He meets all the requirements for a fellowship offering, and thus places us in fellowship with God. Since even on the cross none of His bones were broken, He also meets all the requirements for a Passover lamb, whose blood protects us from the angel of death.

Thus He prepares us for the resurrection. As uncomfortable as this sounds, this is the core belief of the Christian church. Christ had to die as a human sacrifice for our sins to appease the, quote, God of Leviticus.

The most prominent religion on this planet, practiced by two billion people, has human sacrifice, in italics, as its central tenet. Well, you get the gist. If you want to hear more along this line, and I encourage you to understand, and you can put yourself in the place of somebody who is looking at things from this vantage point, and it makes a kind of sense, right? If you didn't know what you know, you'd say, well, you know, human sacrifice, senselessly slaughtering animals.

You know, we have pets. We wouldn't want to senselessly slaughter our pet to propitiate God or anybody else. And many times the animals that were raised by the Israelites were known to them in the ways that we know our pets.

People with small flocks of goats and sheep and cattle gave their animals names, I would guess, just as we do. And here comes a calf, here comes a lamb, here comes a kid of the goats. And, you know, this is Bossy's calf, or this is, you know, Wilhelmina's kid.

That's the female of Billy, in case you're wondering. So, you know, they knew them well, these

small flocks and herds. They raised them from lambs, raised them to be adults, and to take their offspring and take them down and cut the jugular vein, cut the carotid artery all in one go and watch them bleed out to appease God, supposedly.

It's understandably shocking if you don't know what's going on. In the same way that laying a small child down on a table, knocking them out, strapping them down, and then cutting them open with a knife is shocking. If you don't know that this is for an appendectomy or this is for a corrective surgery to do something that will benefit the child in the long run, simply walking in and seeing a bunch of masked people coming in and strapping a child down and cutting them up, cutting them open, would be shocking.

It all is context. It is purpose. It is whether or not you understand the larger issues that are at work.

Many things are shocking if you don't know why they're happening. Any kind of power tools near my teeth is a sobering thought unless I'm convinced that it's ultimately going to be for benefit and for good. Just ask Dustin Hoffman if he thinks it's safe.

So, how do we answer this? What is our... And we say, well, you know, but I'm a Christian. I know that... Well, seriously though, what's the whole issue in animal sacrifice? What is the rationale? Because it's not the same as the child living after they're operated on and they have a better life. Once this animal dies, it's dead.

Once you perform an animal sacrifice, it's gone. And what about all these pagans and so on who also did sacrifices? And we were horrified and shocked by them, the Aztecs, the Inca, the ancient Canaanites and so on. But where does it leave off? Where is it good and where is it bad? So, this is going to be the topic of our study for the next several weeks, sacrifice in the Word of God, Christ portrayed in the sacrifices.

And my question to you is, couldn't God have found a kinder and gentler way to prefigure the Lord Jesus? Couldn't He have had the Israelites cut some branches off of a fig tree and arrange them in the shape of a man and then pound steaks into it or cut it up or pour olive oil on it or do some other sort of harmless-to-life mode? Well, where does the idea of sacrifice begin? Where does it start? Turn to Genesis chapter 3. We are aware that God is a righteous God and violating His righteousness is what we call sin. To disobey God's command is sin. Well, what if the command that God gives makes no sense to me or very little sense to me? For example, we've got 700 trees in this little preserve.

You may freely eat of 699 of them, but this one tree, don't eat from it. 699, do whatever you want. Make pies.

You can peel the fruit. You can slice the fruit. You can mash the fruit.

You can sauce the fruit. You can juice the fruit. Anything you want to do with the fruit of 699 trees.

This one tree, no. Don't eat from this tree. If you eat from this tree, you will die.

Let me ask you from the standpoint of the person that wrote the Why Doesn't God Heal Amputees article, does an omniscient, all-knowing, all-powerful God have a big investment in people only eating certain kinds of fruit? Is He about the fruit? Is He concerned? Is the fruit the issue? This is a fruit that I don't want anybody eating because I'm an all-wise, all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful God, and I've got a thing about this fruit. The first thing we need to understand is that God has purposes. God has principles.

God has thoughts at His level that are not immediately perceptible to us. In the same way, I was thinking about this yesterday as Becca and I were walking the dogs. You and I have thoughts and purposes that our pets don't understand.

Your cat, your dog. If it's the time of day where you typically take them on a walk or if it's the time of day where you typically feed them but you don't, what's the dog thinking? Oh, well, I'm sure there's a higher priority here and you probably needed to answer that phone call or get that bill paid or handle this plumbing emergency or whatever it might be. And it's okay.

I understand that something is. Does your dog understand any of that? It is time to go. Why aren't we going? It is time to eat.

Why aren't we eating? Small children, you know, much the same. And if we could make the dog understand, look, we're going to let you walk when it's not pouring rain outside or when it's not so muddy that we're going to have to bathe you right after we walk you, or I will let you out in a second but I have to finish this food that's on the stove. You know, we understand things that we cannot possibly make the dog comprehend.

So what do we do with animals? We get down at their level. If we want them to learn to sit, we push their back end down onto the floor, and when they will hold that pose, then we give them a little treat. It's a reward.

We say, You did what I wanted you to do. You get a reward. The dog's sitting there thinking, I put my bottom on the ground and that's what? I thought I had to chase a squirrel.

I thought I had to go dig something out of the ground. I sit, and this is a cause for food? What sense does that make? It's time to go and we're not going? What kind of sense does that make? At a dog level, we are stupid. These people don't understand.

There's a squirrel and you're not letting me chase it? You're holding me back. It's a squirrel. Look, I can get there.

Do the geometry. Do the trigonometry. Look, there's a tree.

There's a squirrel. There's me. My speed, his speed.

I can get him. Trust me. Unsnap this leash.

I'll show you. Oh, no. We don't let him go.

What sense does this make? One dog talking to another. Does your master hold you back? What kind of people are these humans? Perfectly good rabbits. I saw a limping rabbit and somebody said, I could have caught that rabbit on three legs.

My master wouldn't let me go. Does that make any sense to you? It doesn't make any sense to me. If you and me were in charge, why, these leashes would snap at the very sight of rabbits and squirrels.

But there's something else going on, isn't there? We have a higher and grander understanding as human beings. Well, bump that up one level and we realize that when God gave the command about the tree in the garden, it wasn't about the fruit. In the same way that your dog sitting or your dog lying down or roll over, what personal benefit does a dog get from rolling over? What benefit do you get from him rolling over or shaking hands? Shake hands? Play dead? A lot of people have done this.

My dad had a friend. The first time I ever saw it, I was a small child, but my dad had a friend who had trained his dog to do several little funny tricks. He would aim his finger at him and pull the trigger, and the dog would fall over and play dead.

He would just go bang, and the dog would go plunk. Then he would hold out a dish or a treat or the dog's actual food and say, this is army chow. The dog would turn his nose up like this.

Then he would say, this is Marine Corps chow, and the dog would just snap it up. But what benefit does that confer? In the great survival scheme, it makes sense to us at some level. It's either humor, it's entertainment, it's whatever our purpose is.

It doesn't matter to the dog. The dog has to trust and obey, basically. So that's what's going on with the fruit.

And by extension, we see that God works by analogy in many things. By the way, analogy is one of the fundamental principles of the universe. How does science work? If I put sodium and chlorine together under the right conditions, what do I get? Two poisonous, life-endangering substances.

I put them together, and what do I get? NaCl. N-A-C-L, salt, right? Table salt, white salt. But what if you've got some chlorine that I've never seen, and I've got some sodium you've never seen? If I put them together, what am I going to get? Salt.

If I do it over here, I expect that it's going to happen over here. This is part of the taken-for-granted order of the universe. And once I understand, you know, in the old Bohr model of the atom that a lot of us cut our teeth on, I don't think they even use it anymore.

It was a lot easier to understand. And for prediction purposes, it's much better. But, you know,

valences, shell electrons, and all of that, you can predict.

Even though you haven't dealt with certain elements, maybe you have never taken, you know, hydrogen and carbon and oxygen and made various sugar molecules, but you know by analogy that if these substances combine in this way, these will combine in that way. That's what you get on your chemistry test. You've never actually mixed most of these chemicals, but you can say on paper what they will do.

It's analogy. God teaches us, and this is the primary point in our first session, about why sacrifice. The question is why sacrifice, particularly why animal sacrifice, and ultimately why the sacrifice of Christ.

First of all, it's not about the animal. It is not about the material of the sacrifice. It is the principle behind the sacrifice.

And to think about that, think about the tree in the garden. Is God just very protective of one particular tree or one particular fruit, or is He using the tree and the fruit to communicate in an analogous fashion a higher principle of truth? We are going to use the tree and the fruit and the prohibition of eating this particular fruit to teach a higher truth. Makes sense, right? If you think about that tree, we're at the threshold of walking through the door of understanding why animal sacrifice.

It's not about the fruit. It's not about the fruit. Okay? Plenty more where that came from.

Plenty more fruit. Plenty more trees. We teach a dog obedience with tricks.

When I tell you to shake, you shake. When I tell you to roll over, you roll over. Not because these are essential dog skills or, well, you know, the house was catching fire, so I told Rover to roll over, and that solved the problem.

We use these as seemingly meaningless, particularly to the dog. Meaningless to him. But what are we doing? We are training the dog to listen to and respond to commands.

If he will listen to and respond to this command, then when it is important, like when my dog is running to the edge of the cliff along the trail there chasing something, and I know he's going to go over and harm himself, and I say, Major, stop, and he stops and plants his bottom on the ground in the middle of a full-blown run after a rabbit, my dog will stop. I have stopped him in full-tilt run after a rabbit because he is conditioned to obey. And it saved him from going over a, you know where that open field is in that cliff next to our walking trail? That is a long drop.

He would be severely injured if not killed going over that deal. And he was heading straight forward at full tilt, stopped him about 20 feet from it. Did he want to stop? No.

But he's been conditioned over and over and over to stop at my command tone and my voice command, and he stopped. And it preserved him when it counted. My father did the same thing

to me.

I've told you that story about the wire in my eye. It has happened with other children when they're riding their bicycle, and they're about to roll out into the street, and you command your child to stop, and they stop, and the car goes harmlessly by instead of being a sad note on page six of the newspaper, child struck by car and killed. It's not about the content so much as it is about the teaching, the training, the inculcation that goes on in and through that ritual, that practice.

This is why we go to school and do story problems. We don't actually need to figure out which train is going to meet the other train where between Chicago and New York. We don't actually have to understand if Jane gives Tom 12 apples, and he eats five of them, how many are left.

We don't need that information. It's training. It is aimed at a higher purpose.

Animal sacrifices are not conducted in the Old Testament because God just loves the smell of burning animal. God can't wait to see you tear a bird partly in half, wring off its head, throw its guts in one direction. Oh, yes, God is up there, just hand me another bowl of popcorn.

An animal sacrifice is taking place. I love this stuff. So that's principle number one.

God is dealing scientifically. Science uses example to project. If I do a sampling, if I do a model, then I expect that from the model, the reality will follow.

So principle number one in sacrifice in general, animal sacrifice in particular, and the work of Christ on the cross most specifically, it's not about the physicality of it. The physicality is analogous. It is a teaching tool for higher truths.

Now, you may think that, well, gosh, you could have told me that 30 minutes ago, and I would have gotten it. But if you think about the view of the world, this is the first fallacious assumption that is made, is that God enjoys animal sacrifice, or that God condones slavery because He just thinks human bondage is great, and people owning one another and abusing one another and treating each other like chattel property is just a great thing. If you don't catch this first assumption that both animal sacrifice and slavery and a host of other things in the Bible aren't there for their own sake.

Divorce is in the Bible. Does God love divorce? No. Why does God permit divorce? Jesus explains this, but people don't catch that first important principle.

It's not about the sacrifice. It's not about the slavery, and it's not about the divorce. It is about conceptual truth that is communicated and is illustrated and is amplified in and through those practices.

You've got to keep a grip on that understanding, or none of the rest of this study will make any real sense. Well, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to look

at the origin and nature of human practice when it comes to animal sacrifice, and this will smooth our path, pave our way to the first several chapters of Leviticus.

Let's pause here and take our break.