

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-05-31a

This is Sunday, the 31st of May, 2015, and we continue our study, Sunday morning study of Christ and the Sacrifices. We're going to be in Genesis chapter 15. And before we begin, let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is to address you across the gulf that separates the immaterial from the material that separates us as fallen and sinful from you in the heavenly and holy realms in perfect righteousness and perfect justice. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who as our mediator has bridged both of those impassable and impenetrable barriers and gulfs between us. We thank you that through Him we have access not just formally but as family to you as our heavenly Father.

What a tremendous privilege. We thank you for Him. We thank you for the Lord Jesus' faithfulness in His life, in His willingness to take on the form of a servant and come in our likeness and humble Himself and in obedience to your plan and purpose, offer Himself as a sacrifice in our stead.

We pray that as we study the particulars of His work as it is revealed and foreshadowed in the Old Testament that God the Holy Spirit will impress the truths on our hearts in a way that motivates us and encourages us to follow His example and to live a life that is pleasing in your sight and that glorifies the Lord Jesus. Until that day when we are brought finally and fully before you through Him and by Him. We pray that our study this morning will be an encouragement to each one who participates and partakes that we can be ministering and a blessing to one another and that in all things we will reflect the righteousness through faith that pleases you and that you will be equips us for the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen. We have had two previous sessions on Christ and the sacrifices and by way of quick review in the first pair of sessions we looked at the whole concept of sacrifice, why does it even exist and in its existence why is it so shocking? Our Christian faith is centered on and its very symbol reflects human sacrifice which most cultures and most individuals find pretty shocking. Why would our faith and the faith of the hundreds of millions of believers that have gone before us turn upon such a sobering concept and we realize that this idea of blood sacrifice reflected in the animals sacrificed in the Old Testament days foreshadowing the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ in His human flesh.

He's not a spirit that is sacrificed, He is a human. He bore our sins in His body on the tree. He was wounded for our iniquities.

He is bruised for our transgressions. By His stripes we are healed. The life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the physical existence as a human being is essential as He comes before God offering the perfect sacrifice, the atonement that achieves redemption, reconciliation and propitiation.

So looking at the concept why sacrifice we see that first of all it is memorable. It conveys to us

the seriousness of the problem. This is literally life and death.

Salvation is a life and death proposition. And separation from God due to sin and iniquity is death. In the day that you disobey the command to not eat from this tree, in that day you will surely die.

As a side note I would suggest and this is only a speculation on my part, but when God says to Adam, in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. How would Adam know what die means if he had not had some example, had not observed it in some form or fashion? There is a curse on creation due to man's fall, man's moral failure in the garden. But the Bible nowhere says that there was no death on the planet prior to partaking of the fruit.

This has been a sometime assumption. But some of the other witnesses that we have to the truth of God including the record of the rocks indicates that there has been death in the animal kingdom and in the plant kingdom going back to the earliest manifestations of life. In many cases there is life, there is reproduction and once reproduction is accomplished there is death.

This makes room for the subsequent generations. And when God tells the various forms of life in the first chapter of Genesis to reproduce after their kind, the idea is that reproduction is necessary not only to fill the earth but to replace those that scroll off due to death. God says in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

I don't think this was a word that Adam had to look up in the dictionary. I think he knew what death was. The Garden of Eden was a special, secluded, exclusive environment outside of which I personally think that there was carnivorousness, there was prey and predator, there were all of the things that characterized the various species that lived not only on vegetation but also on one another.

Now the animal kingdom was largely herbivorous according to Scripture, but it doesn't indicate that it was exclusively so. We like to think that there was no such thing as baby seals being eaten by killer whales prior to, but that isn't what Scripture declares. At any rate, the separation from God that results from sin leads to death.

God is light, God is life, to be separated from that light and that life is to die. It is inevitable, it is the nature of things that there is no such thing as life apart from God. So, we moved on from that to look at the first examples of sacrifice.

We saw that the skins with which the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve had to come from animals that were slain. They are not like snakes that shed a skin and leave it laying around to be used without harm to the progenitor to give up a hide for clothing, the animal must die. And then Cain and Abel and we looked at the acceptance of Abel and his sacrifice and the rejection of Cain and his sacrifice.

There is an important element there where Cain's sacrifice is of the produce from his fields, his crops, and Abel's offering being of the flock, the firstlings and the fat thereof, the very best, and

they necessarily lose their lives. And there is importance that attaches to what the sacrifice is, but that isn't what disqualifies the sacrifice ultimately. Ultimately it is what is in the heart.

You can bring a great sacrifice, but if your heart is not right, if you are not bringing it for the right reasons, in the right spirit, that sacrifice is invalidated. We find out later in Scripture God says, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Sacrifice is acceptable when it comes from a heart that recognizes mercy and practices mercy.

We forgive others as we are forgiven. We are merciful because we have received mercy. We love because He first loved us.

That is the attitude of heart that God is looking for. So we saw that last time. And the idea in and at the altar of substitution.

This is a second great thing. The first thing about sacrifice is animal sacrifice, blood sacrifice is shocking and it makes an issue of life and death. Relationship with God isn't casual.

It's not like, well, you know, you can have a friend if you need him, if you want him, but you can do fine without him. It is life and death. It is eternity or no eternity.

And sacrifice emphasizes this all or nothing life or death situation. Secondly, inherent in sacrifice is the idea of substitution. Because I have sinned, because I am sinful, because I am inherently conceived in iniquity, born in sin, separated from God, your iniquities separate between you and your God.

Your sins can hide His face from you. There is the need for redemption. There is the need for reconciliation.

There is the need for a restoration of that which has been cut off and interrupted. If I pay the price of death for my sin, I am morally justified, but I am physically dead, which kind of defeats the point. Instead, there is the idea of substitution.

And honestly, even our own death doesn't pay the penalty. We need a death that is a transcendent death. We need a death that is more than a death.

It is a restoration. It is the basis of a regeneration and a new life. People say, well, you know, if the wages of sin is death, why doesn't my physical death at the end of my life pay for my sins and God can just raise me up and everything's good to go? I paid the penalty of death.

Isn't that what Jesus did? He died for sin. If I die for my own sins, why can't God just raise me up and we're good to go? Because it's more than that. The necessity is for the life that we lose to be restored.

For there to be resurrection, regeneration, a new and better kind of life. And that isn't something that we merit. It isn't something we can earn or deserve.

It is a gift of God. The gift of God is eternal life. The wages of sin is death.

But once you've paid the penalty of death, you're not qualified for eternal life. The gift of God is eternal life and that comes through Jesus Christ ultimately. And the sacrifices, picture this, so paramount is the attitude of the one bringing the sacrifice.

Is it in recognition of blood guilt? Is it in recognition and humility of dependence upon God? That's essential. I cannot restore myself to God even by dying. God has to do the restoration.

It is in and through what He provides. So in this idea of substitution, we see that the life of the flesh is in the blood. And you cannot bring a gift, a menka type of offering, which even there you have sort of a substitution idea.

I want to give myself to God. How can I express my gratitude? How can I express the idea that I want to give, I want to return something of what I have received to God? It is the menka. God has blessed my crops.

I will give Him of the first fruits. I bring it before Him and honor Him as its source and its progenitor and thank Him for giving me the privilege of being the steward of these material things. And I put the gift, the gift stands in for the giver.

We do this all the time. Christmas, birthdays, occasions of congratulation and celebration, we give a gift. It isn't like, you know, that person really needs a card.

They really need a folded piece of cardboard here that I think they're short. Maybe they need some notepaper next to the phone. Maybe they just need something they can fan themselves with.

I'll give them a card. Why do we give a card? Why do we send a card? That really doesn't work if it's email, if it's a, you know, online greeting where it's a little funny cartoon or something. But when you send a card, what's the idea? Especially if you're not located in the same town or the same city and you can't be there and you send a card.

The card speaks for you. The card expresses for you what is in your heart, that you're glad that you share joy in the birth of a child or the passing of another year and successful efforts during it and so on. And it is, the gift is put for the giver.

The gift represents and says something on behalf of the giver. It is a kind of substitution. All gifts, all offerings are of that nature.

And so that element is there as well. And when you look at Cain and Abel, Abel brings of the firstlings and of the fat of his flock. That's what's in his heart.

To God belong all things, everything that I have stewardship of. And the only reason I have a flock or a herd is because of him. I bring him the firstlings and the fat.

And this would normally be what any rational person would keep to build the herd and build the flock to be all it can be. But I recognize that every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of I give this to him knowing that he will bless me despite the laws of heredity and breeding and so on. There is an element of faith in bringing the best and bringing the first and bringing what the world would never bring.

And by the way, what Cain doesn't seem to have brought from his crops, it doesn't say he brought first fruits, it just says he brought of the produce. So there is that element. But it goes back to attitude of the offerer.

The life of the flesh is in the blood. You notice that when Noah stored extra things on the ark, the extra were clean animals for sacrifice. It doesn't say he brought extra corn.

He brought extra wheat. Corn in those days just meant your vegetable crops. They didn't have the maize type yellow corn that we have at that time.

But it doesn't say he brought extra seeds, he brought extra crop materials, it says he brought extra animals because the idea was that sacrifice reflects the truth in its life blood aspect. Well, we then move to Abraham in Genesis chapter 15 and just as we look at Abraham, let's look back at chapter 14 for just a moment because I want to point out something that affects how we understand chapter 15 that is in chapter 14. You remember the story, the kings of the north.

You have Keter Laomer, king of Elam in verse 9 of chapter 14, Tidal, king of nations, king of the Goyim, Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Elessar, four kings against five. And in the valley of Siddim full of asphalt pits, slime pits, kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled. Some fell there.

The remainder fled to the mountains. So the four king confederation took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, their provisions and went their way. They also took Lot, Abraham's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom and his goods and departed.

So there is a defeat, there is a captivity and there is a taking into slavery. So some escapees let Abram know that this had happened when he found out that his brother, notice verse 14, that his brother was taken captive. Is Lot his brother? Lot is his nephew.

But Scripture is not as precise as we sometimes think it ought to be and it is a caution sometimes when we say, well, Amram and Jacobed were Moses' mother and father. You've got to understand the lack of specificity in some of these family relation terms. Jesus says a lot about how you treat your brother and He's not talking about a son of your mother and father.

Anyway, it calls Lot the brother here and he takes his armies and he divides his forces and in verse 16, after the defeat of this four king confederation, he brought back all the goods, brought back his brother Lot and his goods as well as the women and the people. The king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh, that is the king's valley after his return from the defeat of Keterliomer and the kings who were with him. Then we have this very interesting section, chapter 14 of Genesis verses 18 and following, then Melchizedek king of

Salem brought out bread and wine.

He was the priest of God most high and he blessed Abram and said, blessed be Abram of God most high, possessor of heaven and earth and blessed be God most high who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tithe, Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, give me the persons and take the goods for yourself.

That Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand to the Lord God most high, the possessor of heaven and earth that I will take nothing from a thread to a sandal strap and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich except only what the young men have eaten and the portion of the men who went with me. They deserve a portion of the spoils as their recompense for joining Abram in this confederation to go fight the battle. So Aner, Eshcol and Mamre take their portion.

So they take a portion. Now my question is, if Abram has raised his hand and sworn that he's not even going to take a shoelace, what did he give Melchizedek? Well, what is it that the king of Sodom is trying to give Abram? Spoils from Sodom and ostensibly perhaps from Gomorrah and the other three cities. We will give you some of our stuff and pay you for delivering us.

Abram says, I'm not going to take anything of yours. What is it that he gave a tenth of to Melchizedek? This is what he took away from Kedrlomer and Tidal and Amraphel and Ariok. These guys had stuff with them.

And these spoils do go to Abram. He's not giving the stuff that belonged to Amraphel and Tidal and Kedrlomer to the Sodom and Gomorrahites. He's not giving it to Lot.

That spoil belongs to him. From his own, he gives this tenth to Melchizedek. Now here's what interests me though, that's kind of a side note.

Is there any sacrifice involved at this point? Is there any sacrifice mentioned? Is anything quote-unquote given to God? Abram has raised his hand to God that he's not going to take any for himself of what belongs to Sodom and Gomorrah, tainted goods. But it simply says he gave him a tithe of all. And who is Melchizedek? Melchizedek is priest of God Most High.

This is really the first mention we have of priesthood. What we're looking at right now is the relationship of priesthood to sacrifice. Do you need a priest, number one, to sacrifice? Is a priest required for sacrifice? Did Abel have a priest who presided, came in, vetted the sacrifice, said, yeah, that's good to go, go ahead? Did Cain fly in the face of the instructions of some priest and say, I'm bringing this, leave me alone, it's good enough? Did he have sort of a Isaiah attitude, I'll come in before God in my own terms? He may have had that attitude, but he didn't do it against a priest.

There was no priest dragging Cain away from the altar saying, you're not doing it right. Did Noah have a priest when he sacrificed after he got off the ark? So why priests? If you don't need a priest for sacrifice, then why are there priests? Well, one way to look at it is, here's a priest,

what's he doing? We want to figure out, and obviously here, this priest exists and functions and the whole episode takes place without any association with sacrifice. Be doubly interesting if Melchizedek had built an altar and taken some of the spoils, if he had taken the tithe that Abram gave him and put it on the altar and set it up in smoke before the Lord or some such thing, none of that is here.

So here's my question to you, see if you can answer it, pop quiz. What is the relationship of priesthood to sacrifice? If you don't need a priest in the patriarchal days, why do you need a priest later on? Well, there is no Bible verse that says, thus saith the Lord, the reason you need a priest is, if there were, I would give it to you. But here is my suggestion on why this is the case.

When in the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants' view, we're looking at the nascent, incipient, and eventually existent, extant, and prolific nation of Israel, when does priesthood kick in? Do they have priests when they are slaves in Egypt? Yes or no? No. How about the night of Passover? Sacrificing the Passover lamb, it is a sacrifice, the lamb's blood is spread on the doorpost, life and death, it's manifestly a sacrifice. How many priests are involved in that? None.

What is Passover a picture of? Deliverance out of slavery? Going forth from bondage? It's a picture of salvation by the blood of the lamb, right? How many priests were involved in that archetypal sacrifice? Zero. When do you see the priests? How about when Moses makes the covenant on behalf of Israel with God in his role? Goes up to Sinai. When he goes up to Sinai and brings down the covenant with God, how many priests are there? Think carefully now, is Aaron a priest when Moses goes up the mountain and receives the tables of the law, when he gets all the instructions for the building of the tabernacle, when he gets the instructions for the ephod and the breastplate, when Israel says, all that the Lord hath said we will do, is there a priesthood, a functional priesthood at that point? No, not yet.

All of that takes place without the interaction or function of a priest. So how much priesthood is involved in salvation? How much priesthood is involved in covenant relationship with God? There is certainly sacrifice involved, the benefits of sacrifice, not priesthood. What was the original notion that God had for prophet and priest in Israel? When he first talked to Moses at Sinai, at the burning bush, what was the idea? You Moses are going to get it done.

Moses says, I can't. God says, all right, I'll divide the job duties between you and your brother Aaron. But in the beginning it was not so.

Kind of like Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your heart, God permitted Moses to split off the priestly duties to his brother Aaron. But in the beginning, what was the model, what was the idea at the burning bush? Moses would be prophet and priest. The priesthood gets split off to Aaron as an accommodation because Moses says, I just can't do it.

And there is a lesson in that because what is the Lord Jesus? He is prophet and priest and king. But back to my question, when does the priesthood function? When does it come into being and begin to operate? At the point that there is a nation. The priesthood functions at the point that there is a nation and a designated place of worship.

There is no tabernacle without the priests and there are no priests without the tabernacle. They come into being together. And what is the tabernacle? It is the earthly manifestation and expression of the throne of God, the presence of God.

The hem of His garment comes down over the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, right? So the priesthood functions at that time. So there is a nation. And when does the priesthood cease? How many priests were functioning in the Babylonian captivity? Were they doing priestly functions? Were they serving the altar and lighting the lamps and why? What did Nebuchadnezzar do? 586 B.C. what did Nebuchadnezzar do? Destroyed Solomon's temple.

And with the destruction of the temple there is the destruction of the priesthood. And what happened to the nation at that point? No nation. So, as we conclude our first session, the priesthood seems to be associated with the nation, right? No nation, no priesthood, nation, priesthood.

Now I'm back to Genesis 14. What is Melchizedek? What's he identified as? Priest of God Most High. Why? If our assumption is valid here, oh by the way what does his name mean? Melchizedek.

What's it mean? King of Righteousness. Now, am I a king? No. Why? Unless you're Nat King Cole and you've got some other reason for being king.

King requires a kingdom, right? If you're a king with no kingdom, you're really not a king. If he is the king of righteousness, what do we know about Melchizedek? And if he is a priest, what does both king and priesthood imply here? Salem is the capital of a kingdom. There is an entire kingdom of which this guy is both king and priest.

And it's not Abraham. Interesting, no? King of Righteousness, this is righteousness, but he's a priest of God Most High, the God. But it's not Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and yet he is a king and a priest.

If he's a king, there are subjects, there's people, there is a kingdom with Salem as its capital. King of Salem, this is like being king of Jerusalem, right? We tend to forget that Melchizedek's not a lonely, dusty, goat hide-wrapped geezer out there wandering around in the desert waiting for Abraham to come and give him a tenth. He is a king and he is a priest.

If he is a priest, then he is serving a nation that is bringing sacrifice before God Most High. And it is a completely separate kingdom from that which God promises to Abraham and his descendants. It is associated with a nation.

Well, these are intriguing ideas and they relate to sacrifice. I'm still turning this question in my mind. What is the relationship of priesthood to sacrifice? We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to look at chapter 15 and oddly enough, we are going to get the answers to those questions. Let's pause here and take our break.