

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-06-07a

This is Sunday, the 7th of June, 2015. I'm going to have to get a bigger watch. Sunday, the 7th of June, 2015.

We're in the study of Christ and the sacrifices. Such a rewarding study to look directly at the Lord Jesus Christ in the many ways He has communicated to us in God's Word. And in the first book of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we have already seen several very helpful and deep foreshadowings, anticipations of the Lord Jesus.

We'll resume, as I said, in the vicinity of chapter 15. The verse is just preceding that. There's a half-dozen verses at the end of chapter 15 that we're going to wrap up and then move forward this morning.

Let's take a moment to dedicate our time and our concentration, our fellowship, and our study of God's Word to the glory of the Lord Jesus as we pray. Father, what a privilege it is to view and see the revelation of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the pages of Scripture. We're so grateful for the provision that You have made that in our corrupt and fallen status as human beings limited to the material world, we are yet initiated and inducted into heavenly truths and divine and eternal perspectives through Your grace and because of the work of the Lord Jesus Himself on our behalf.

We thank You for Him. We thank You for the example He left us of how to live in this life. And we pray that as we look at these Old Testament figures and types that Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will help us to understand and especially to appreciate the value and the meaning of these truths for our personal walk before You so that we can live in a way that pleases You and that glorifies our Savior.

We pray these things in His name. Amen. Well, we have seen now for a couple of weeks, because this is such a pivotal moment in the history of not just Israel, not just the Old Testament, but a pivotal moment in the history of mankind.

The revelation of God's plan and purpose in and through the nation of Israel and specifically the seed, capital S, of the woman that will descend through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the Savior of the world and the light to the Gentiles of which we are all partakers is all important. And there is a very rich tapestry and a multidimensional presentation here of that plan, that work, that revelation. And you could camp here by the springs of living water for weeks and weeks and never have it run dry.

So we have to sort of decide, as is so often the case, do we dive deep or do we take a goodly sample and then move forward? And of course we have to take a sample and move forward. So we will conclude this morning looking at this particular episode that reflects Christ in the sacrifices. You remember the situation in chapter 15, the word of the Lord has come to Abram in a vision.

He says, do not fear Abram. Now in the Old Testament, unlike in our day, the presence of the Lord in your proximity created genuine fear. How many times in the Bible, and you can actually answer this question because of our electronic age, how many times in the Bible does it say, fear not? Why is God constantly having to say, fear not, when there is a divine manifestation of some sort? Fear not.

Jesus walking on the water, fear not. They think He is a ghost. We are even in a boiled down, veiled, see-through-the-glass, darkly manifestation where the glory of God doesn't incinerate us.

We recognize that there is something well above and beyond, and that God's holiness is so distant from anything we could qualify to live with that it creates fear. So God's first words to Abram are, fear not. I am not here to judge, to slay, to create hardship and bad circumstance.

I am rather your shield and your exceedingly great reward. I myself am your reward. What did Jesus say in John 14, 6? I am the way, the truth, and the life, the only way to come to the Father.

No man can come to the Father but by me. The goal is to come to the Father. He is the reward.

He is the destination. He is the endpoint of our relationship. I have occasionally dallied with the idea that the English word Christian, we are Christians, and it's good.

I've got no quarrel with it. But isn't our relationship actually through Him? Isn't there a way to be fatherans or paternians or something that indicates that our relationship is with the Father? This is what Jesus consistently taught. He and the Father are one.

But if you're doing this, you have your device, your electronic device up to your ear, and someone says, Who are you talking to? I'm talking to my phone. I'm all about my phone. I just talk to my phone all the time.

It isn't really the phone. It's who's on the other end. Well, God appears and assures Abram that he is his protector and his reward.

And this is right after God has already demonstrated this in granting him victory over the kings, Keter, Laomer, and that crowd. The king of Sodom, king of Gomorrah, king of Admon, and the king of Bela all get defeated by Keter, Laomer, Tidal, Amraphel, and Ariok. So it's four on five.

The four win. The five are taken captive. Abram goes up and, with God's help, rescues.

Remember that hymn, Rescue the Perishing? Well, this is rescue the pagans, rescue the... You know, it's not like corruption in Sodom didn't happen until after this. Yet, God uses Abram to give them a deliverance that ought to speak to them, that ought to get incorporated into their conscience and think about the God that is able to deliver against seemingly insurmountable odds. It is a testimony and it is a witness.

Why can God summarily judge Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone and bomb them

out of existence? Not even into the Stone Age. He bombed them out of existence. How can He do that? They have already had the witness.

That entire town and all of its surrounding region has already had the witness and the testimony of the God of Abraham unequivocally. They know all about what happened with Melchizedek. They know to whom Abram attributed the victory and they are without excuse.

They are godless, they are pagan, they are perverted in many ways, they are wicked, evil, and yet God proactively demonstrates His power, His opportunity for deliverance, and to a man they reject it, and to a man they are destroyed, not many chapters hence. Same thing in the land of Canaan. You remember, it's a little known fact that the testimony was written on the whitewashed cliffs before Israel ever came in and destroyed the Canaanites.

Everybody says, oh, God's a murderer. He sent His people in to slay and pillage and hack up men, women, and children and the animals. He's a cruel, anthropogenic God.

He just slays everything and everybody. There was ample warning. Rahab was one of the few that responded to it.

Well, after all of this, God comes back and affirms what Abram already knows. And isn't it interesting that after God grants him this deliverance, he's done the thing with Melchizedek, and he's back home. As soon as God appears, Abram is afraid.

And God says, don't be afraid. Abram still has a healthy awe and respect for God. If you look around the Christian world today, I would suggest there is a tragic lack of appreciation for just who and what God is.

The casual, almost flippant way that people reference God, come before God in prayer, is ill-founded in my observation. Abram has the right idea. Nobody on the planet is on better terms with God at this point than Abram.

But look at Abram's attitude when the presence of God is manifest. He has a healthy fear that God has to reassure. And that's how it ought to be.

Well, Abram says, Lord God, what will you give me seeing I go childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? We talked about this. You've given me no offspring. Indeed, one born in my house is my heir.

And the word of the Lord comes saying, this one shall not be your heir. How many times is Eliezer referred to here? How many times is Eliezer referred to? Once, twice, thrice. Two times by Abram, once by God.

He is specifically mentioned, one born in your house will not be your heir. The application of that, the prophetic understanding we gain from that is, the church which respects and loves Israel and everything that it represents, I'm talking about biblical Israel, and those things that

come from Israel, such as our scriptures and our Savior and all of the apostles. Yet, we are not the heir of the covenant promises to Israel.

The church is born in that house. But three times it is affirmed that although Abram thinks maybe Eliezer is going to be the heir, God says no. Eliezer is a faithful man.

You know that in the story of Rebecca. But he is not going to inherit under Abram's promises. He will have some program that isn't mentioned in Scripture because the church itself is a mystery, not revealed in its fully orb'd form, only anticipated, only in the shadows until the New Testament time when Paul explicates, expounds, expands, reveals what God reveals to him about us.

But three times. There are a lot of threes in this passage. A lot of threes.

Brought him outside. Look now toward heaven, count the stars. So shall your descendants be.

Abraham believes. He says, I'm the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to inherit it. How shall I know that I will inherit it? Now how many times has God told Abram that he's going to inherit to this point? So shall your descendants be.

I will give you this land to inherit it. How will I know that I will inherit it? Bring me three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon. We have three animals and two birds.

The three animals are unique. They are divided. They are each three years old.

The birds are not divided and apparently are across from each other in the presentation through which God is going to pass. Not divided. Nothing said about their age.

There's no three applied to the dove and the young bird of some sort. Probably another dove. So now, if you have three animals and they're three years old, that's three threes, which makes what? If you divide the three-year-old animals and look at each side, you have three, three, three.

Three, three, three. We are invited to multiply the threes, it would seem. Now, we sort of left on a question last time we looked at this passage.

What is the idea here when Abram divides them and then nothing happens? This would be like Elijah on Mount Carmel preparing the sacrifice. You remember what the prophets of Baal did. They prepared their sacrifice and they waited and waited and danced and cut themselves and chanted and knocked themselves out silly waiting for Baal to manifest himself, which of course he never did.

There is a time to wait on God when you have a solid promise on which to stand. Did you hear a couple of weeks ago that there was a family who was part of a small fellowship of Christians and they had a toddler die and they all got together and decided that God was going to raise

the toddler from the dead and for the next two or three days they had prayer and round-the-clock vigils in great confidence that God would do a Lazarus-like miracle on their behalf and raise this child from the dead, which of course he didn't. There's a saying in the Marine Corps that I can modify and use here.

Good initiative, very bad judgment. The very bad has a different adjective, but good initiative, bad judgment. It's wonderful to trust the Lord, but we have to be sure that we're on solid ground in what we trust Him for.

God has made no promises regarding bringing people back from the dead that we think shouldn't die. God has made no promises regarding preserving the lives of those of us who are currently alive. Any of us could go at any time.

God makes no guarantees that you have tomorrow or the next day. Abram believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness because he had his focus on a sure word of revelation from God. God directly told him something, he believed it.

Absence of evidence, but certainty that this is a word from God. Abram doesn't think he's hallucinating or got a hold of a bad bowl of lentils. He knows that this is God speaking and when God says a thing, he says, okay, and we see the proof of that faith later on on Mount Moriah, don't we? But my point here is three threes and this begins with fear that God has to reassure and it ends with fear that God is going to reassure because after he divides the three three-year-old animals and lays the birds across from each other, then he spends the rest of the day waiting.

Hours go by, the sun traverses his course across the sky and begins to set and there has been no further communication from God. Remember when Saul was waiting in the days before the battle and Samuel didn't come and didn't come and it's getting late and Saul says, well, if we don't do something, the opportunity is going to pass. And so Saul offers the sacrifice himself.

You can imagine Abram saying, well, maybe I'm supposed to build an altar and burn these things. I mean, there are screaming things. When it says that the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

If you look at the word translated vultures, there's no such thing as a vulture in the Bible. This is a descriptive word for a screamer. They're the cawing birds, the swoopers.

They swoop and scream. This is the idea of the word. And we don't know what these were, but they are noisy and they are carrion eaters.

They're trying to get at the sacrifice. They're trying to spoil the sacrifice before it can be completed. They are trying to spoil the ritual, whatever it is God is going to do.

And of course, the flying things of the air, making a lot of racket, are often a picture in Scripture of the prince of the power of the air, the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of

this age that are invisible like the wind. They dwell in the spirit world. And this is something Abram has to actively fend off.

He has to preserve this while he is waiting. He doesn't just wait in calm. He's not there with a long piece of grass in his mouth whittling little things out of sticks.

He is actively preserving this picture until the picture can find its fulfillment. And that is rich with meaning for what Israel is going to do in preserving ritual purity, waiting a long time before God fulfills it, before God invests it with presence. God is going to be present in the midst.

But before He is present in the midst, it has to be protected and preserved, and Abram has to wait. And that is on purpose. God could have come to him in the evening and said, well, you know, grab him, slice him up, I'll be there in a minute.

God tells him apparently early in the day on purpose. And God waits until it's dark, waits until after the sun has set. The setting of the sun, as we know from Ecclesiastes, is symbolic for the end of life.

It can be the end of existence of a nation. It can be the end of our life. You know, in the sunset of my years is a common concept.

Now, verse 12, when the sun was going down, how close is the end of the existence of the formal nation of Israel when the Lord Jesus comes and fulfills the law and fulfills the types and fulfills the sacrifices? The sun is going down on the nation, isn't it? And it has been attacked and afflicted. And the sun is going to eventually set. But as that sun is going down, just 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the legions of Titus, and no stone left on another for the temple, a few decades before that, the Lord Jesus comes and is the presence that makes all of those shadows meaningful.

As the sun is going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. Well, now that the thing is about to happen, Abram falls asleep. Have you ever been waiting and waiting and you fall asleep and then you miss a thing that you were waiting for? I have not only had this happen to me, but I have observed it in others, others even beyond my own experience.

A deep sleep fell upon Abram, and behold, horror and great darkness. God says, I'm your shield, I'm your reward. How do I know that I will inherit? Let me tell you.

Here you go. Darkness, horror, and great darkness, carrion birds, dead meat. Really, Lord, this is your assurance? Horror and great darkness.

What is the deal with the horror and great darkness? Why isn't there, you know, and there was with the angel of multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. They were sore afraid. This isn't the glory of the Lord.

This isn't brightness. What is associated with the coming of the Lord Jesus? Does it say, and

behold, during three hours of darkness, Jesus was born in a stable or born in a manger. What's the sign of the coming of the Lord to which the wise men are attracted and follow? It's a light.

It's a star. When the angel announces to the shepherds, the glory of the Lord shines. Here, it's darkness.

Why? At a distance, even a bright light is dim. You can see it. They used to constantly warn us in the Marine Corps, you know, they'd put out the smoking lamp and nobody could smoke because they said, you can see the little burning end of a cigarette, you know, seven miles away.

So no smoking. You give away our position. One little cigarette, and this is back before they had all the thermal imaging and night goggles and the rest of it.

It's visible, but of course, it's very faint. That's what's happening here. But horror, this is terror.

This word means terror. It means things that make you genuinely afraid. Why? Here's why.

God wakes Abram up. A deep sleep falls on him. Now, is God speaking in a vision or is He speaking in presence? Why do I say God wakes Abram up? Because He is there to pass through the physical pieces, right? He doesn't pass through the pieces in a vision.

The pieces are real and the presence of God. But notice carefully here that there are two different events. This is separate.

Just like the pieces are divided, there's a row on the left and there's a row on the right. Yes? Look at this. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep falls on Abram.

Horror and great darkness fell upon him. He's afraid like he was at the beginning. Then God says to Abram, when is this again? Remind me.

When the sun is going down, this is happening. God says to Abram, know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and will serve them and they will afflict them 400 years. What is the setting for the delivery of this prophecy? Glory? Happiness? Know certainly that your descendants are going to live in a land flowing with milk and honey for 400 years.

That's not the prophecy. It's a dark, foreboding prophecy. Now my question is this.

Answer me this. Why? Abram, I'm your shield and your exceeding great reward. You're going to have descendants you can't count more than the stars.

They're going to inherit this land. You're going to inherit this land. Oh, by the way, they're going to be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years.

First. Why? Well, there is a meaning in it. There is a reason for it.

Now suppose you're an Israelite in the third century of that four century oppression. And by the way, we talked about this in our Genesis study, but depending on how you look at this, when does the 400-year clock start? The easiest and simplest math is Abram lives circa 18-something B.C. and the Exodus takes place in 14-something B.C. It's 400 years. That's one way of slicing the pie.

It's the easiest. It's not the only one, but for purposes of instruction, we'll stick with that. The actual enslavement in Egypt is going to be more like 215 years.

That's a long study in itself. But just think about the 400 years. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace.

You shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete. Why is there oppression? Why is there darkness? Why is there enslavement for 400 years? So that the iniquity of the Amorite can be complete.

It is necessary to let sin and evil and corruption manifest themselves in all of their manifold forms before God will bring deliverance. Sin has to run its course. It has to be seen for what it is.

And God's people are the object and the target, and in some cases, the perpetrators of that evil and of that sin. Sin has to become sin indeed. Paul has this discussion in Romans.

I was alive once apart from the law. The law came, sin revived, I died. Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Why does God have us be conceived in iniquity and born in sin and live in corruption until we're delivered by faith in Christ? So that we know.

This is something the unfallen angels never experienced. This is something Lucifer and those who followed him did not know when they fell is what it's like to be fallen, to be separate, to be apart, to be in the grip of death. And God says, I am going to use human history and I'm going to use my own chosen people as an example of what corrupt, degraded, defiled, separated from life and from God looks like.

It has to run its course. We have to wait. What happens to meat when it sits in the sun for a whole day and starts smelling enough to attract carrion birds from a distance? What happens to these animals? We like to think, oh, it's a perfect picture of Christ and in some ways it is.

But why does it sit all day in the hot sun? If you've been in the Middle East, you know what the sun does to things in a very short time that are dead. And by the end of the day, this is attracting the screamers and swoopers. And how do they get attracted? The stench of rotting meat.

Death. Manifest death. It's for a reason.

It's for a purpose. And God says, know certainly that your descendants are going to experience

the victimization, being the target, being the recipients, being on the receiving end of the consequences of sin and evil and corruption and hardship and persecution. They are going to know what it is like before I deliver them.

That is the story of the human race. It's the story ever since Eve and Adam partook of the fruit. God wants us to know what it's like before we are delivered.

And even after we are delivered, we stay here and engage in the conflict. And we see the contrast between good and evil in our daily existence. And some days evil wins.

When we are doing what we are supposed to, the goodness of God, the righteousness of God prevails. But we observe at first hand and we are intimately engaged in that struggle. We are the people of God and God brings us in contact with it on purpose.

That's why the darkness. That's why the horror. It's horrible to be separate from God.

It is horrible to experience the death that is the inevitable wage of sin. And we need to know that. As a human race we need to know it.

As individuals we need to know it so that we will never choose it again. As for you, you'll go to your fathers, you'll be buried at a good old age, but in the fourth generation. Now first he said, for what? They will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and will serve them and they will afflict them, how long? 400 years.

Here he says in the fourth generation. So how long is a generation in Abram's day? 100 years, right? Four times 40 is only 160. And in the fourth generation, i.e. after 400 years, those two are equated.

Why the number four? Is it a specific chronological thing? We know that there's debate about the chronology. There's certainly more than four actual physical generations between Abram. It's not like Joseph came out of Egypt to go to the promised land, fourth generation, in the fourth generation.

The generation here speaks of in the fourth century afterward. And this is a reminder to be careful about assigning technical meanings to biblical terms. Day doesn't always mean day.

Generation doesn't always mean physical descendant. Your great-grandson will come out with great possessions. No.

Generation means there's going to be four somethings that speak of a generation. But it's not necessarily a technical term. But what's the number four stand for? We know this.

We remember this. We've studied it in Revelation. Four winds, the four points of the compass, four physical dimensions.

What does it mean? Completeness on the earth. This is fullness, in the fullness of time. The

Passover lamb was kept up four days to fully inspect its purity and qualification as the Passover lamb, Passover sacrifice.

So four generations, 400 years, so that the iniquity of the Amorites is then full, fully completed, fully brought to fruition. And it is at the point where God is going to wipe it out the way He wiped out iniquity in the flood. So, in the fourth generation, they shall return for the iniquity of the Amorites is not completed.

It came to pass when the sun went down and it was dark. Separate event. More time passes after that revelation.

The horror and darkness are all Abram's experience. Nothing has happened with the meat. After the sun goes down, more time passes.

Abram is still there. He's chewing on that prophecy, horrified by it, sitting in the darkness of it, when after the sun has gone down and it is even darker, then behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch. Torch is not a great source of light, especially smoking torches.

There's a lot of smoke and a little bit of light. An oven is a surrounded and contained flame. You only see the flame if you open the door or look through a crack.

So, it's a contained, a veiled light, a veiled energy, a limited expression of what fire can be and do. This isn't a wildfire. It's not a bonfire.

It's not the fire that comes down and consumes the sacrifice. And then, that is what passes between the pieces. Now, the prophecy, on our closing note here, the prophecy says your descendants will be oppressed and come out with great possessions after 400 years.

We talked about the three-year-old animals, three of them. What's three times three? Nine. How many plagues are there in Egypt? Be careful now.

How many plagues? Nine. There's nine plagues and one judgment. A plague you can get over.

What's the first plague? Nile turns to blood? Did the Nile stay blood? No. Flies, frogs, lice, darkness, moraine, hail, all of those things are plagues. They come and they go.

What is the final thing that happens? It is not a plague. It is a judgment. The firstborn don't die and then wake up a few days later.

When the firstborn in Egypt are judged, they are gone. And they are gone permanently. That is a judgment.

Nine plagues and a judgment. And it is the judgment of the firstborn that delivers Israel. That is the representative.

Remember, everybody in the house was not in danger when death passes through the land. Who is protected by the blood on the doorpost? Everybody in there? Only the firstborn. Childless couple, unless he himself was a firstborn son.

Does he have to worry about losing any children? Any of the girls in there? Any of the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth brothers, sisters? There is only one, two at most in any given household. And that is a father and son. You could have a firstborn son of a firstborn son.

Those two guys probably sweating whether the blood is sufficient. Right? In that regard, just as an aside, talking about the Passover, which we will eventually come to. But remember the application of the blood.

Where is it placed? On the two doorposts and on the lintel. It is a little known fact. And we've been through three of the four Gospels verse by verse.

And we've studied the Passover several times. And I don't know that I ever thought about pointing this out. Or that I knew to point it out.

But the Bible in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, nothing that Paul says is there ever any mention of a nail in Christ's feet. Never says it. It's his hands.

Very well could have been one in his feet. It just doesn't say that. There is no biblical documentation for a nail through Christ's feet.

What do we have documentation for? The hands and the crown of thorns. And that's what the Passover pictures in those three applications. We've said, well, if you splash it on the lintel, it'll drip down.

But it wasn't applied down there. And there's no mention in Scripture of the nail. It's just a Bible trivia question perhaps.

Perhaps not. Say all of that to say this. The prophecy here is primarily you're going to have to wait and there's going to be a lot of hard times before the fulfillment of this great covenant promise comes to pass.

So why the prophecy? We've said why the events. Why do the children have to suffer? Why do the seed and the descendants have to go through this? It is a picture of what God's doing throughout history. But why the prophecy of it? You have need of faith and patience so that after you have suffered a while, you inherit the promise.

It's a pattern throughout Scripture. You wait, you're patient, you have faith, then you inherit. That is what's going on with us.

We have a better covenant founded on new and better promises, but the mechanism is the same. After we have suffered a while, it is a part of God's plan that we endure hardship, that we go through difficulties. And knowing that, we do what Abram did.

We bat away the swooping shriekers that try to remove those God-commanded evidences, those God-commanded ordinances, those God-commanded actions. We persist, we wait, we preserve the picture, knowing that God is going to come, God is going to fulfill, God is going to work, even though it is dark, even though there is death in it. At the end, there is life.

At the end, there is possession. At the end, there is inheritance. And most of all, at the end, God Himself is our exceedingly great reward.

Let's pause here and take our break.