

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-07-26a

This is Sunday, the 26th of July, 2015. In our study of Christ and the sacrifices, we are in the book of Genesis. Many such studies begin in the book of Leviticus, and obviously that's a good place to begin with such rich detail in those first six or seven chapters looking at the law of Moses as it pertains to Israel in covenant relationship with God.

But there is so much to be seen in the archetypes, in the beginnings of sacrifices that we have seen in the first half now of the book of Genesis. And we're doing a quick review. We've looked at them in some detail.

Now we are backing up and seeing what is it about the Lord Jesus Christ? What is it in terms of His saving us, being our mediator, being our intercessor, being the bridge between earth and heaven, between man and God? What do we learn about that through the typology, the symbolism, the metaphorical teaching value of these earliest sacrifices recorded in Scripture? We'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, focus our concentration, clear aside distractions, and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that the portion of God's Word that we look at this morning will have its full effect in our hearts. Shall we pray? Father, it is humbling for us to see the vastness of Your mercy and compassion on us where we begin in a lost and hopeless condition, where we continue as fallen and corrupt. And yet because we belong to You, because we have claimed the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, the spiritual realities of being in Him and being acceptable in Your sight overwhelm and outdistance and cause to pale into insignificance the minor details and inconveniences and shortcomings in this life.

We thank You for our heavenly hope. We thank You for the bright future that is securely ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the ongoing provision and blessing that we enjoy here as we seek to redeem the time and have the circumstances that we navigate be converted into something of eternal value.

We pray that as we study this portion of Your Word this morning that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will impress it on each heart in a unique and meaningful way so that it will return to our thoughts in the hours and days ahead. At the point of application, we will be caused to remember how significant it is and how important it is to be in Christ, to represent Him on this earth, to be pleasing in Your sight as we follow His example, as we see Him so fully revealed in these sacrificial types of the Old Testament. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. In our study so far, which we reviewed last time, we've looked at how we can be in Christ through the sacrifice of the Holy Spirit. We've looked at three or four of the earliest recorded sacrifices.

Typically you say, Old Testament sacrifices and offerings, let's go to Leviticus. Leviticus chapter 1, the whole burnt offering. Leviticus chapter 2, Leviticus chapter 3, we go to the meal offering,

the Thanksgiving, the trespass offerings and so on.

Wonderful study in Leviticus. We have taken that portion of God's Word and made a study just of that and it is very fruitful and we will be returning to and reviewing that. But these first sacrifices are so meaningful.

We saw the very first, which is almost like so many things in Scripture, like the miracles that Jesus performs, you really have to look close to even see the miracle. It's pretty much the lead up and the aftermath that Scripture focuses on. Jesus has a lengthy conversation with the disciples before He multiplies the loaves and fish and there's a lengthy description of what happens afterward.

But if it was Hollywood, there would be a Zoom and there would be special effects and CGI and heavenly choruses singing as the loaves miraculously become more and more bread and as the fish miraculously become more fish. How exactly did that happen? We are fascinated with the means and with the action itself. But God's Word emphasizes what does it mean to us? What did Jesus ask and what did the disciples reply ahead of time? What did Jesus have them do with the crowds? Why were they broken into companies of 50? What is the aftermath and how many fragments and baskets were taken up? This is the thing that we miss.

Same thing in these early sacrifices. The very first sacrifice is easily overlooked because there's just a single almost incidental mention of the fact that God clothed Adam and Eve with skins. But this required a blood sacrifice.

An animal had to die and in a substitutionary fashion its covering becomes a covering not for itself any longer but for Adam and Eve. Now if there is one word that sums up the issue, the meaning, the purpose in these symbolic sacrifices of the Old Testament as we saw last time, I won't ask you, I will just tell you, it is acceptability. Adam and Eve as a result of sin are not acceptable.

They know it. They're not acceptable in each other's sight so they sow fig leaves together. But they know the fig leaves don't help in the sight of God so they hide.

What would you hide behind in a garden? A lot more leaves. We sowed some around our waist but we need a whole forest of leaves and that's not enough to conceal us from God. So there's not enough vegetation in the earth to make us acceptable.

And the issue is acceptability. Looking at Christ in the sacrifices, this is what Christ has done for us. We who were afar off have been brought near.

We are acceptable in the Beloved. We are accepted in Him. We can come boldly before the throne of grace.

Why? Because of Christ. He has opened the way. He's made a new and living way through the veil which is His flesh.

And that sacrifice is what we're looking at as it is anticipated, as it is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. So those skins and something new that you can watch for as we step forward to where we left off is, and it's interesting to me, that in connection with each of these sacrifices there is a word from God that results in a promise arrangement, that results in a kind of covenant. Now there's covenant theology and people have cataloged formal covenants and so on.

I'm not on that road. In the garden, after the fall, when God speaks and says, here's what has happened, and He makes a pronouncement about the serpent, He makes a pronouncement about the woman, He makes a pronouncement about the man. Remember that? These are by way of prediction and promise.

This is what is going to happen. These are the consequences. On thy belly shalt thou go, dust shalt thou eat.

The serpent has a cursed earth to deal with. The earth is mentioned. You will go on your belly on what? Are you going to be a tree-dwelling snake? No.

On your belly, on the surface of the earth, you will crawl, you will slither, and you will eat the dust. The earth is a part of your curse. The man, by the sweat of your brow, you will till the soil and get your food.

You're not going to pluck it off the trees, which suspend it up at a convenient height above the earth. It is now in the ground. And the earth is cursed and you're going to have to toil, you're going to have to sweat as you interact with the ground to get your food.

And then the woman, travailing to bring forth, dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Well, the dusty people are going to give in their marriage birth to dusty offspring. We're all of the earth.

We come ultimately from the earth. They say you are what you eat, and all of us are the product of food that we've eaten, and when you're young it's food your parents ate, and all the way back to the garden. But we are of the earth.

All of our atoms and molecules ultimately come from the ground, and when you die and decay, your earthly body returns to that dust. So it's all about the earth. The earth is cursed.

And we, as a part of the earth, it's a little leaven leavens the whole lump. And when we are cursed, the earth that we come from and that we return to is cursed as well. So that is the result.

It's a curse. And the nature of that curse is separation. Separation is sort of the opposite of acceptability.

Acceptability implies communion and fellowship. Being cursed, being separated is the opposite.

And you will remember, how did sin enter the world? The serpent is speaking to the couple.

The serpent is speaking to both of them. Eve is alone. And there's a little bit of a chiastic separation here.

Because Adam and Eve are not together, it's sort of a divide and conquer idea. Where is Adam? Why is Eve by herself? Do they not do everything together? Well, I need a little alone time, dear. And so she's off by herself.

And because she is separate from Adam, Adam doesn't have a say in what Eve does. And Satan takes advantage of that lack of fellowship, lack of unity, lack of communion to exploit Eve's weakness. And the appeal is one of pride.

It is desirable to make one wise. Make one wise. Not make us wise.

It's desirable to make one wise. As you well know, Satan's original sin was pride. I will be like the Most High, the five I-wills.

I will lift up my throne above the stars of God. I can do God's job for him and probably better. And he is able to engender that same attitude in Eve, partly because she is by herself.

There's not the opportunity for Adam to say, wait a minute. And once she has fallen, she can't help Adam in his decision to go along with her, because she herself is now separate not only from him by being sinful, and he's not, but from God. And so she becomes a liability instead of an asset.

Now Adam is on his own, as he has to try to make a decision. And he makes a bad decision and goes along with Eve. So there's separation involved here.

And it speaks to the importance of our fellowship. How many times in the New Testament does it talk about unity? Let there be no divisions. I hear that there are wars and divisions among you.

It should not be so. Don't divide. Don't separate.

Don't take minor things. Whatsoever things are good, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things have good report. Not necessarily in that order.

To the extent that these things exist, focus on that, so that the peace of God will prevail. Peace, not disunity. Peace, not conflict.

Because where there is conflict, where there is division, where there is separation, this is where attack can come and failure is the result. Well, we see all of that just in that context of the first sacrifice. There is, as we learn about the Lord Jesus Christ, what's the first thing we find about the seed of the woman that has already been spoken of by God? It is the idea of substitution.

Someone else, something else, has to die so that I can be acceptable. I can't be acceptable by plucking a few leaves. An animal has to shed its blood so that I can have a covering.

And of course the word atonement actually means covering in Hebrew. Covering. And this idea of vicarious, vicar in Latin essentially means substitute.

This is why it's so dangerous talking about the Pope as the vicar of Christ. He's the substitute Christ. He's the alternate Christ.

Christ is not here, but we have the Pope. No, Christ is not here, we have you. You are the vicar of Christ, as am I and as are all of us.

We are the body of Christ, not some guy with a pointy hat off in Italy. And it just raises the hair in the back of my neck when people say, oh, the Pope, the vicar of Christ. And I think, that sounds an awful lot like Antichristos.

So, substitution is introduced in the very first pages of Scripture, very first part of the scroll. Then, secondly, we saw Cain and Abel. Now, think about not only acceptability.

Cain is not accepted and his offering is not accepted. And God says, if you do well, will you not be accepted? But if not, sin lies crouching at the door. Its desire is to have you and you've got to overcome it.

This is the struggle. There is a conflict. Be aware of it.

Know its consequences. If you do not do well, sin is going to attack and overcome you. You have got to overcome it.

And when God says you've got to overcome it, that means you can. By God's grace and with God's resources, we can overcome sin. Do not ever give up on your besetting sin.

Well, you know, it's just the way I am. I tried so many times. I just can't overcome it, whatever it is that gets me.

God is just going to have to give me credit for whatever is left. It's just like the sear on my trigger is worn down so far. I just have no resistance left.

The lock on that door is so worn and broken, I just can't get that door to shut anymore. Nonsense. Don't let Satan plant that stupid idea in your mind.

You can overcome sin because it does not depend on you. It depends on him. If you are constantly overcome by sin, if you have besetting sin that always gets you, you are looking to the wrong source of strength to fix it.

Cursed is the man, say it with me, cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength. Of course you are cursed. Of course you are going to fail.

They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. That's the divine power.

Birds, wings, heavens, that's the divine realm as we will see again here shortly. Don't let Satan do what he did out of the tree to Eve in the garden. Don't give up.

Don't hand victory. There have been people, you watch a chess game and somebody is one move away from checkmating. All they have to do is run their rook down to the 8th row and it's checkmate.

They just don't see it. They are struggling. They are trying to protect a bishop.

They are trying to save a pawn. You are not allowed to speak if you have good manners while people are playing chess. You think, don't you know that you've got the one move? You just almost explode watching this thing.

You've got the victory in hand. They are just sweating and struggling. I'm about to lose this pawn.

Wake up. Don't hand away your victory. We have the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never ever decide that your sin is just too big. It's too much. I'm too weak.

Of course you are too weak. We are all too weak. The Lord Jesus Christ is not weak.

You are going to the wrong place for the solution. You are attempting the wrong way of resisting. If God says resist the devil and he will flee from you, why isn't he fleeing? Why is he talking and we are listening? We are going about it the wrong way.

Go back to basics. Cain and Abel. Acceptability.

Cain was not accepted. God says if you do well you will be accepted. It's up to Cain.

He could come back and offer a good sacrifice, but what does it take? Humility. He's going to have to go trade some crops to his brother to get the proper sacrifice that he can bring without the shedding of blood. There is no remission of sin.

There is no recognition of that substitutionary sacrifice. I think that is an element. It's not a good thing.

There are certain offerings that are acceptable in God's sight as we find from Leviticus that are made of the fruit of the land, but the other comes first. You can't celebrate first fruits if you have not yet acknowledged sin. If you are not in good standing with God you cannot engage in a fellowship offering or a meal offering or a Thanksgiving offering.

You have more fundamental issues to settle first. If you have had a big knock down drag out with someone close to you, you don't just walk up and hand them a watch for their birthday

and everything is okay. That underlying issue has to be resolved first.

Then in the context of a healthy relationship these expressions of gratitude and appreciation are meaningful, but it will be taken the opposite way as God did in Malachi looking at the offerings and sacrifices Israel tried to bring when their heart was not right before Him. It tainted everything that they did. Because Abel refuses to be reconciled and acceptable in God's sight, he cannot be reconciled and one with his brother.

Because of that sin multiplies. Sin exponentially increases and the separation and the cutting off from God results in the murder of his brother. There is an idea there that if you are not right with God you are going to damage the people around you.

There is cursing by association. You think, well my relationship with God is a personal matter. It's between me and God.

True. However, be aware that the longer you ignore or abuse that responsibility for restoration and fellowship with God, the more damage you are going to do to those around you. You can't help it.

You are cut off from life and you are cut off from strength and you will be a curse to those around you. You know, it's just my interior life and I'm just going to operate. No.

It will spread. You are a cancer cell and you are going to infect and damage those around you. The longer you remain unacceptable in God's sight, separated from Him, separated from life, separated from blessing, grace, power, yes your besetting sin is going to be set and it is going to hurt and damage others.

And that's the picture in that second area. But notice also that there is sort of a negative covenant there. We saw that God spoke in the garden as a result of the sin and the fault and there were consequences.

They are expelled from the garden. They are separated from that wonderful place of ideal blessing and fellowship with God. And there is a moderated fellowship with God that is at a further distance.

And there is a relationship with others that is different and less close outside the garden. People are busy. Women have to bear children.

Men have to go out and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. And so there is a necessary diminishment of that ideal togetherness and ideal fellowship in both the vertical and horizontal directions. And God speaks that as He pronounces those curses as they are called.

It's really just status statements. Same thing with Cain. After he murders his brother and God tells him your brother's blood cries to me from the ground.

Then God says here is what your status is going to be and you are going to be, because you are

separate from me and have made no effort to repent, to avail yourself of divine grace, you are going to be separated from others. Fugitive and a vagabond. Cain says it's too great.

People will kill me. Why? Because I am a pariah. I am an outcast.

I am a blight. And God says I'll make a covenant even with you. And anyone who slays you, there will be sevenfold retribution.

And this is a protection for Cain but it is also a word to others. Others are told don't kill Cain. Divine justice is dealing with him.

This is not your place. Contrast that with the third sacrifice which we've given kind of a light touch and that's in Genesis 8, verse 20. After the flood, after the judgment on those whose every imagination was only evil all the day and all of the animals and the ground is judged and perishes because of that, Noah builds an altar.

Genesis 8, verse 20. Look at Genesis 8, 20. There is something new here.

In the preceding seven chapters and 19 verses, this has never appeared. It's here for the first time in Genesis 8, 20. Do you see it? What's here that's never been mentioned in Scripture before? Noah built a what? An altar.

Altar has never been mentioned. Cain and Abel, no altar is mentioned. Built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal, every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

It's mentioned not once but twice. In case we missed it the first time, it mentions it again. An altar.

What does an altar do? If you didn't have an altar and you were offering sacrifices, where would the sacrifice be? On the ground. On the dirt. Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground.

And there are times when this is significant. We're going to see in the Levitical offerings there are times when the priest is going to sprinkle blood at the base of the altar. What's the base of the altar sitting on? The ground.

And it has significance and the significance goes all the way back to here. But what does an altar do for the sacrifice? If you had to pick a verbal expression, what does the altar do? Lifts it up. The sacrifice is lifted up from the earth by the altar.

That's what an altar does. It lifts it up. And the great thing about an altar made of unhewn stones is it requires no tools.

Suppose it was going to anticipate the cross and well the altar must be made of wood. We must make a Viking funeral pyre of some kind. We must make some sort of Iroquois stand and put the altar up on this thing and the whole thing will be consumed.

You've got to have means for that. You've got to have tools and there has to be nearby trees sufficient to make the thing out of. You know what's great about unhewn stones? The entire earth is covered with unhewn stones.

You can do it anywhere. But these stones are not dust of the ground. They're something different.

And they lift the sacrifice above the dust, above the earth, above the soil. The cursed ground, cursed for man's sake, lifts it up. The sacrifice is lifted up.

It's mentioned here. Why? The curse on the earth has been so vividly portrayed in the preceding couple of chapters with Noah's flood. And you would think, well, haven't God's waters of judgment cleansed the earth? Apparently not because it takes an altar to lift the sacrifice.

That purge has not removed the curse. There has been an amelioration. There has been a cleansing.

There has been a purge. But it is not sufficient to remove the curse. The ground is still cursed.

And the sacrifice must be lifted up from it, in a sense between heaven and earth, to be accepted in God's sight. Noah built an altar. And when he offers his sacrifice, look at verse 21.

The Lord smelled a soothing aroma, then the Lord said in his heart. I'd love to know how we find out what the Lord said in his heart. It doesn't say the Lord proclaimed in heaven.

It doesn't say a voice from heaven spoke to Noah saying. It says the Lord said in his heart. So how do we know this? I don't know.

In some kind of way the word trickled down to man. The Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground for man's sake. What's the issue here? Curse on the ground.

Right? The ground has already been cursed once. And I cursed it in a sense the second time I judged it with the flood. I will not curse it again for man's sake.

Although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. And what we often forget is, you know, God said I won't destroy the earth by a flood. And my rainbow is the proof of that covenant.

And we miss and forget verse 22. What does verse 22 say? While the summer and day and night shall not cease. God's promise after the flood isn't primarily I'll never again destroy every living thing with water.

This is the primary covenant statement by God. So long as the earth remains, meaning there is going to come a time when it does not remain. But so long as this earth remains, global warming is not going to destroy seed time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day

and night.

They're not going to cease so long as this earth remains. It's the promise of God. The great wormwood asteroid isn't going to strike and end the seasons, end the growing of crops.

There will always be a way for man to draw his food from the ground. Can't do that while it's all underwater. But the very first thing that God promises, you would think, why doesn't He do the reverse? Day and night, winter and summer, cold and heat, seed time and harvest will persist so long as the earth remains.

It's the other way around. Why? Because seed time and harvest goes back to what He told Adam. You will till the ground by the sweat of your brow for your food.

And God says that ability will persist so long as the planet endures. And all the other things necessary to make that happen. Why do you need cold and heat? Why do you need winter and summer? It's all about agriculture.

It's all about making sure that there is food that can be grown, that there are seasonal times of rest and rejuvenation. There's a time for planting and there's a time for harvest. And it is dictated by the seasons, which are in turn dictated by day and night, by cold and heat.

So God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. But there is another covenant word from God here related to Noah's altar. And in the same way that Adam's sin spread to all men, in the same way that Cain's sin had an impact on all men, everybody is now subject to a seven-fold curse if they mess with Cain and try to take his life.

There is a blessing by association with Noah. One man builds one altar and offers these sacrifices upon it of the clean animals and God makes a pronouncement that affects the entire earth. One man makes an offering, lifted up from the ground, and the whole earth is blessed.

The whole earth has a covenant promise from God. It is typical. It is anticipatory of what the Lord Jesus is going to do for the world.

There is going to be a benefit that accrues because of one man's faithfulness. Well this catches us up now and we're going to pause and take our break. When we come back we're moving toward Abram, we're moving toward the parts and pieces by way of our review, but we're focusing on the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, the revelation of what He does for us and what we can claim, what you and I can claim day by day.

Anytime you think back on these sacrifices you think back, well, the skins. I have a covering. I am acceptable in God's sight because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you think of Cain and Abel you think there is faith and obedience that is required of me and if I do well I will dwell in that acceptance. Acceptance is available. Acceptance is proffered by God, but it is only obtained and it is only enjoyed through faith and obedience like Abel, like

Noah.

And I can be not a curse to others like Cain, but I can be a blessing to others like Noah if I am faithful and obedient. What I decide, what I do makes a difference to the world around me, to those around me. You want to make a difference? It isn't how you vote, it's how you live.

It isn't what you donate, it's how you live. It's not momentary incidental conversational tidbits, it's how we live that impacts the world. You want to make an impact for Christ? Be faithful and be obedient.

Be Noah. Well, we'll see the outworking of this and there's an intermediate sacrifice so to speak that we're going to mention when we come back that I don't think has ever been in any study of the sacrifices to my knowledge, but it'll be an extra free no charge observation when we come back from the break.