

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-08-09a

This is Sunday, the 9th of August, 2015. We're continuing and advancing our study of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Old Testament in such great detail, specifically in the sacrifices, the ritual offerings that God prescribed for the earliest generations of mankind extending down through the patriarchs and into the nation of Israel. And it is at that point where the nation of Israel forms and these sacrifices are detailed and codified as part of the ritual law that we resume our study this morning.

Let's take a moment as we do, and as dry as that sounded, it's going to be way more interesting as soon as I say amen. So don't be daunted. You will be glad you were here this morning.

Ritual and ceremony sound kind of dull. Trust me when I tell you it's not. And let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank You for this day. Thank You for our standing in Christ before You and the wonderful blessings and opportunities that it confers on us who ourselves have no worth or value, but because such a precious price has been paid for us, we are lifted up and in Him we are eventually raised to service and to reflecting Your glory in ways that we can hardly imagine. We thank You for this time on earth where You use our circumstances to teach us and to train us and to become familiar in an experiential way with the knowledge both of what is good and what is evil.

And we pray that as we continue our study of the Lord Jesus Christ, as You revealed Him in these Old Testament paradigms, that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will impress these things on our hearts in a way that is meaningful and helpful and that enhances our preparation for those future potentials. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Christ in the sacrifices. We did a fairly extensive review the last week or two, beginning with the earliest sacrifice, the animals who gave their lives so that Adam and Eve could be, in a word, starting with A and ending with able, what? Acceptable. Acceptable.

Cain and Abel, if you do well, will you not be what? Accepted. If not, sin lies crouching at the door and its desire is to have you. But you must overcome it.

There is a struggle. There is an ongoing battle. God mentioned it as He described prophetically how human history would run with the serpent, with the woman and with the man.

The struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. There is a reason, in other words, for this issue. Why can't God just say, okay, offer a sacrifice, everybody is acceptable, now we're done.

There is history. It is going to span countless generations from Adam forward until human history has served its purpose and comes to a conclusion to be followed by heavenly future

history. This is an interlude.

On God's clock this is a very brief time. To us it seems just endlessly lengthy. But to God this is just a debate point in a conversation in heaven.

It has to go slow for us because we have worm brains. We have very small and inadequate faculties of perception. We are, and I don't mean this in a demeaning way, but there is one sense in which we are here to make a point in a larger conversation.

We are examples. You think about the characters in Scripture and you think, well, doesn't it sort of diminish them and demean them that their whole lives are boiled down to a few sentences or paragraphs or a couple of chapters at most and they are there as object lessons. They are sort of like Aesop's fables.

They are a little morality tale and doesn't that in some way diminish them? Not at all. It is an honor and a privilege to be a part of God's plan in whatever way He chooses and we are that. So we have seen that this use of animals is one order lower than that.

In the same way that we are object lessons in a conversation that God is having with the angels about the angelic fall and about the judgment of that rebellion and that departure and the sentence that has been passed after that judgment. You are found guilty of rebellion, sedition, departure, animosity, refusal to be reconciled. This is true in the angelic civilization and the judgment for this, for those angels that have gone that way and made that choice is destruction in the lake of fire.

The Bible tells us the lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. It already exists. The thing is burning now in the metaphorical sense.

And I am not saying that it's not real. I am saying that if you want to talk about a genuine lake of fire, how does that work? Can you make a lake out of fire? Last time I looked at a fire, it's the result of combustion, oxygen combining with things, carbon is left behind and you don't make lakes out of that. It is in the very terminology a metaphor for some transcendently destructive destination.

Fire isn't something that you come out of unless you are sealed with the hand of God like Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah and the fourth man, right? Unless you are seraphim and that burning holy fire is a symbol of the absolute barrier between God and anything that is unholy. Anything that tries to pass through that fire that isn't qualified like gold and silver and precious stones will be destroyed, not tortured, destroyed. The fire of God in judgment destroys.

You don't use fire as a tool of instruction. Well, child, you disobeyed? Come here and let me burn you. That's not what fire is for.

Fire is an element of judgment in the destructive sense. Fire destroys. How much is going to be

left of our wood, hay and stubble at the judgment seat of Christ? Well, you know, some of that stubble was pretty dense and you know, it's black on the outside but you know the core of it.

If you ever had to burn the trash and unless you get out there and stir it, you know, stuff will survive. It's combustible but if the oxygen can't get to it, it'll survive. You think any wood, hay and stubble is going to survive the fire at the judgment seat? I don't think so.

I don't think one molecule of it is going to get through. So, the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels, to my feeble worm brain understanding, means total and ultimate destruction. So, that's the context.

We are made acceptable in God's sight. These sacrifices teach us A, that acceptability is an issue because good and evil is an issue. And if you are tainted with sin, if you are corrupted with evil, something has to be done or it is the lake of fire for you, right? Sacrifice then first and foremost in taking something that is judged and sentenced for that, there is still hope.

There is hope apparently for Satan and the angels else why aren't they not already in there? Now, whether any of them can avail, what the basis of it is, did Jesus die on a heavenly cross for the angels? I don't think so. I don't know. It's not been given to us to know the details of whether or not.

I saw a guy write a 57-page paper, I would estimate, on the possibility of angelic salvation. I waded through it from beginning to end and I was no more convinced of it at the end than I was at the beginning. We just aren't given that information.

It is not for us to know at this point. Suffice it to say that we do know that between the judging and the sentencing and the fulfillment of the sentence, there is an interlude and we're in it. And we are apparently in some way reflecting the justice of that judgment.

The rightness. Here's what happens if I don't carry out this sentence. Here's what happens when evil and sin are let go to proliferate.

When they are not judged. Pre-flood earth. Earth now.

Earth at the end of the millennial kingdom. If you don't purge it out, it will overwhelm, corrupt, and destroy everything. It is a cancer.

It is a metastasizing, malignant cancer. And you cannot leave any of it behind or what is good and what is healthy will be destroyed by it. It is corruptive.

A little leaven does what? A little leaven just stays in its place and is happy having a little leaven community off in a corner of the dough? No. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. That's in a nutshell the demonstration of human history.

So acceptability. This is a novel thing. And think about the angelic onlookers as God makes a way for those, well look, here's somebody that rebelled.

Here's somebody that broke God's command. Partook of the fruit. Saw somebody else partake of the fruit and joined them.

Eve being sort of the Lucifer in that situation and Adam being the one-third that joined him in kind of a reverse way. And all the angels say, well, we've seen that happen. It's lake of fire judgment.

And God says, look, I love you. I made you and I will find a way to fix this problem if you will accept it. Because whether the solution works, whether an evil and sinful and corrupted creature can be restored to fellowship and function in God's sight depends on a change of mind because we are made in the image of God just as the angels are with free will.

And free will is the issue. No solution will work if you do not choose it. Twelve Step Program for Alcoholics, the book, AA, that has worked for countless tens of thousands of people and it has not worked for countless tens of thousands of people.

Why is that? Because that program is a way predicated on acknowledgement of a higher power and the conviction and the admitting that I can't fix this myself. I need help from outside. And that's a matter of choice.

Some people will affirm that and conclude that and believe that and act on that knowledge. Others will not. That's why AA works for some people and not for others and all of its derivative and comparative programs.

Well, if the program is so good, it should work for everyone. And it would if it weren't a matter of choice. Human history demonstrates that God has made a way and that way is effective and restores acceptability for service and function and enjoying the presence of God if you choose it.

Abel chose it. Cain did not. The large civilizations of the world did not.

Israel did. That's how this works. So acceptability.

Well, we've reviewed those sacrifices and what they teach us about Christ because this isn't just an abstract program. This program, this way of acceptability is not only a salvation that God has developed that is satisfactory to His righteousness and justice, but it is centered not in a process, not in a procedure, not in a plan. It is in a person.

The animal that dies is a picture of a person whose life is in His blood. The life of the flesh is in the blood. And as soon as this animal dies, it tells you this is lex talionis, a life for a life.

For God to restore a life, life has to be taken. You think, well, if God's making the world rules, why did He make that rule in the world? Why does it have to be life for life? Why can't God throw a spear at a tree and say, okay, the tree has suffered and now you're saved? Why can't we, you know, burn a Yule log or something and say, well, see, as the Yule log burns, our sins

are incinerated or some such thing. Why does it have to be so bloody, gory, awful? Why does there have to be a human sacrifice at the center of Christianity? Here's why.

Do you take departing from God, rebelling against God, disobeying God seriously? If it's just a matter of sticking a knife in a tree or burning a stick, how serious is sin? No big deal. If it costs a life for a life, that's serious. How else is God going to impress upon us the fatal seriousness of sin? Can you think of something that would do a better job of communicating the awfulness and the damage and the corrupting influence of sin than requiring a life to pay for it? You got something better than that? I don't think we can outthink God on this question.

So that's why the sacrifice, and that's why it is shocking, and that's why the sacrifices were not smothered. That's why they weren't given a lethal injection and sort of quietly went to sleep and didn't wake up. What is the method for animal sacrifice prescribed in the Word of God? Drown them? Smother them? Joke them? Feed them some plant of God's making that will just cause them to get real drowsy and then their heart stops beating and they don't wake up? The state of Oklahoma and some others would like to find that plant.

What's the method? You will take a knife, cut their throat, and watch the blood spurt forth. And that blood is going to be collected, it's going to be splashed on things, it's going to be poured out at the base of the altar, blood, blood everywhere. Why? That's so shocking.

That's so heinous. That's, you know, the ASPCA is going to be all over you for that. And they would be.

Why? It's supposed to be that way. You're supposed to be shocked. This is serious, eternal, universal truth we're talking about here and it does not change.

The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and He is the One with whom we have to be reconciled and there's only one way to do it. I don't want to try to come before God with anything other than the Lord Jesus Christ enfolding me and speaking on my behalf and saying, Father, don't kill this one.

He has accepted salvation through me and He's marked with my name. Look on His forehead. He's mine.

Don't destroy Him. Sanctify Him. Cleanse Him.

He has chosen to be restored. He has chosen to claim and accept salvation through the sacrifice. He recognizes the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only acceptable means.

And praise God for that. There is nothing you could value more than being in Him. That's why Paul spends pretty much the entire book of Ephesians, the first three chapters, certainly talking about how great it is to be in Christ.

So that's what these sacrifices have intimated. This is what they have expressed. This is what they have illustrated and exemplified and amplified and brought out in these metaphorical elements.

No one animal can represent Christ. So sometimes it's an ox. Sometimes it's a lamb.

Sometimes it's a goat. Sometimes it's a bird. Why? There's no animal on earth that could fully exemplify the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are aspects. These are perspectives. These are one view, one thing, one emphasis.

Sometimes it's three years old. Sometimes it's one year old. Sometimes the age isn't specified.

How old is the bird? The Bible never specifies the age for a sacrificial bird. You know why? Think about it. What element of Christ's being does the bird represent? Where do you find birds? In the heavens? The face of the eagle on the cherubim? These other bird-like elements? The Holy Spirit doesn't come down like a zebra.

He doesn't come down like a rock. What does He come down as? A dove. Because birds speak of the deity in the heavenly realms, so why would you ever put an age on a bird? They're ageless in that metaphorical sense.

So these things matter. They count for something. So we saw this in Genesis, and there are more.

We've gone through Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, first altar, Tower of Babel is man's bigger, better altar with a bigger, better sacrifice on top. And God says, you know what? I'm just going to invent languages. And you can't all be one ethnicity and have everybody speaking Hebrew.

Now only my people are going to speak my language. The rest of you are going to speak some alternate. And people scatter and group on that basis.

And so God invents nations at that point and scatters men over the face of the earth. We saw Abram. We saw as he comes into the land of promise and builds what? Altars, altar at Bethel, altar at Hebron, altars to memorialize.

It's more permanent than the moment of a sacrifice, than the occasion of a sacrifice. These are things to which you can return. And the memorial aspect of sacrifice comes in with the altar.

Noah is the first one to build an altar in Scripture, you know, recorded in Scripture. And that's a memorial to God's grace and salvation and deliverance. And God says, I'll give you my own memorial, which is the heavenly rainbow.

Here's something made out of earth. Here's something made out of heaven. There are two memorials that are established after the flood.

Noah's altar, God's rainbow. One on earth, one in heaven. One made of earth, one made of heaven, right? Light.

Not just water droplets, light. What's the very first thing God brought into existence? Let there be what? Light. You can't get more archetypally heavenly and God originating than that.

Well, we could go through the rest of Genesis. What is the rest of Genesis largely taken up with? It is the biography of two men. Who? Isaac gets like a chapter.

Then what? And he's largely a review of stuff that Abram did. She's not my wife, you know, that kind of thing. But who are the major figures in the last half of Genesis? Jacob and Joseph.

Jacob and Joseph. Israel and Joseph. And Israel with all of his other sons is delivered by and brought into a place of plenty.

Where? By whom? In Egypt by Joseph. That's the story of the last half of the book. Well, we're moving now to Exodus this morning.

And in Exodus, God's people are in bondage in Egypt. Classic picture of the inability to escape the influence and the control of sin. The sin that lay crouching at the door has sprung, has sunk its claws into God's people and there they are under that burden making bricks.

Instructed to slay their firstborn. They're sons of all of the different things you could do. Why not kill pregnant mothers? No, leave the mothers, wait for the male child, kill that.

Reiterated by Herod a long time later. Somebody knows something about the seed of the woman, don't they? Somebody is trying to make sure the seed of the woman doesn't rear his ugly head, much less his ugly heel that is going to crush the head of the serpent. There's a reason for that.

It is the leadership of Egypt in Pharaoh that brings this about. No accident. So you have a series of nine plagues.

Nile turns to blood all the way through. All nine of them, right? Pharaoh is not impressed, does not respond, lots of back and forth. Oh yeah, fine, just take away the plague.

No, sorry, changed my mind. Nine plagues. Then you get to chapter 11 of Exodus to which turn.

Exodus chapter 11, the Lord said to Moses, I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether.

Speak now in the hearing of the people and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor articles of silver and articles of gold. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

Moses said, thus says the Lord about midnight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the hand mill and all the firstborn of the animals. What? All the firstborn of the animals? This is something when you talk about Passover nobody ever mentions, is that the firstborn animals were all slain in the land of Egypt on that night. Firstborn of the animals, why? Seems cruel and unusual and unnecessary, why can't it just be the humans? And why just the firstborn? Why not everybody? It's only the firstborn that have beads of sweat forming on their brow on this night if they have any respect for the Word of God.

The second brother, the third brother, if the holes had been there on that night I'd have pearls of sweat on my forehead and Matt and Dan would be kicking back saying, well it's going to be interesting to see if you're here tomorrow. No risk to me, hand me a little more of that lamb. Roasted lamb is pretty good.

Only the firstborn are sweating bullets on that night. Why the firstborn and why everybody, Egypt and Israel and all the animals in both sets of ownership? Why? Hold that question. Verse 6, "...there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again.

But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue." You don't get more graphic than that, all you dog owners. Major has got the longest tongue of any dog I've ever seen. I think that thing has roots way back near his tail and it goes under doors.

When he yawns and his tongue comes out, it's nearly as long as his tail. No dog will move its tongue against the nation of Israel. "...that you may know that the Lord does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." So we have one answer to one question.

Why only the firstborn? If everybody is killed, who's going to get the message that God puts a difference between Israel and the Egyptians? If everybody in the household has to be protected by the blood, all the people who need to have this impressed on them will be dead in the morning. So we pick an individual. Every household has the heir, has the one who is going to assume ownership and authority in that family.

Everybody knows who it is. It's just like in, we were talking about England and the Elizabethan and Victorian eras where primogeniture was very much in effect and, well, he's the heir. He's going to take over the manor and the estates and the servants and the, you know, great celebration when the wife bears a son because he's the scion of the family.

He's going to be the next generation to bear the name and be the 14th viscount of whatever it is, right? You lose that, it is huge. God could have said, put the blood in the doorpost or you're going to lose the scullery maid in every house in Egypt. You're going to lose the butler in every house in Israel and in Egypt.

You're going to lose the lastborn son. You're going to lose one of the daughters. You're going to lose the mother.

You're going to lose the father. Why the firstborn son? So much is tied up looking where? To the future. Firstborn son is the future.

Without the firstborn son, now what? It's tragic and sometimes cataclysmic to lose the heir. Now there's all kinds of plotting and scheming. Who's going to be next? Who's the most closely related? Is it the second son? Well, what if he's, you've seen this in the succession of Caesars and people, it's kind of a free for all.

I'll kill him and then I'll be the heir. Well, I'm a cousin but I'm more closely related because that guy was adopted and this, that and the other. It all becomes in doubt and cloudy.

So that's one reason. Secondly, it is a life. And on this night, the firstborn of the people and the firstborn of the animals are equally at risk.

And it tells you God uses the firstborn animals as a picture of the firstborn people. Animals, people. Life of the flesh is in the blood in a unique way in these sacrificial animals like it is in people.

They are lifted up as an example. They are emphasized as a picture on this night for a reason. It doesn't say the first of the corn that you planted, the first of the wheat that you planted, the first of your broccoli plants is going to wilt and die.

You know, your oldest olive tree will shrivel up and be unfruitful. The fig tree will wither and be gone by morning. It's the animals.

Why? It reemphasizes everything that we've learned in Genesis about what these animal sacrifices mean, what they portend, what they represent, what they communicate ultimately and finally about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It matters. And they are lifted up and made a point in this Passover.

And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me saying get out. God calls the Egyptian masters your servants. They have been made a little lower than the Egyptians, but the Egyptians are called here all these your servants.

They are going to be there to equip and prepare you for a journey. They are going to be useful for your benefit, where in their minds you are useful to their benefit. But it is a reversal.

In the divine view, these Egyptians are there to serve and to benefit His people. Don't let people tell you your value. Let God tell you your value.

What you consider to be a master and someone superior and better than you in whatever way, God looks at it and says, are you kidding me? The only reason that person is even drawing air and breathing is even in your periphery is so that I can benefit you and bless you and use them

and their perambulations and their decisions and their good actions and bad actions as grist for the mill to teach you, to prepare you for the eternal life that you have and perhaps they don't. All these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me saying, get out, and all the people who follow you. After that I will go out.

This of course is Moses talking on behalf of the Lord God. And he went out from Pharaoh in great anger. But the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh will not heed you so that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

What starts out as Pharaoh's servants are going to be Moses' servants. What start out as the masters of Israel are going to be the servants of Israel, pictured here in Moses. But the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh will not heed.

Why? He's a servant and he's not going to heed and I've raised him up for this purpose. I made this particular guy be the Pharaoh at this particular time knowing that he is heart of heart and that anything I say to him just makes his heart harder. I positioned him at this time in this place because I'm going to show you wonders.

I'm using him for my purposes. God didn't dictate Pharaoh's decision. He picked a guy that he knew was going to decide that way.

In the same way that he picked people he knew was going to decide for God to be born in Israel so that they could be benefited. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. He did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

In the same way that mud dries when exposed to the sun, Pharaoh's heart got harder when exposed to the glory of God. Then we come to chapter 12, the institution of the Passover. The Passover is the next great sacrificial revelation in the Word of God, speaking of Christ.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back we're going to look at the details of the first Passover and the ongoing observance of Passover that God made a central part of the law of Moses for Israel. Why? Israel wasn't there to see God provide Adam and Eve with skins.

They weren't there to see Cain and Abel and that sacrifice. They weren't there to see Noah come out of the ark and build his altar. They weren't there when Abram built his altars and offered his sacrifices.

They weren't there on Mount Moriah where it was Abram and Isaac and God and the ram alone. But what they are going to see on an ongoing basis are the observance of these ritual sacrifices and once a year this first sacrifice. That like what we've seen in the account of Hezekiah in Kings Chronicles and Isaiah, there is a three-fold meaning of it.

There's a three-fold usage of it. Passover looks back to the past to the day that God delivered Israel from Egypt. It has meaning in the present for the people who are currently celebrating it

and understanding the import of its elements and it looks forward in their day to the perfect Passover lamb, the ultimate sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has that three-fold reflection, that three-fold direction. It's three-dimensional and what do the elements mean? Why is it set up the way that it is? And what ultimately does that mean for us? That's what we'll look at when we come back.