

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-08-23a

This is Sunday, the 23rd of August, 2015. We are looking at Christ in the sacrifices as they are portrayed in the Old Testament economy, the anticipation section of Scripture, that which looks forward, that which for us is now, as I said to somebody earlier this week, descriptive rather than prescriptive. The law does not prescribe our behavior, but it describes the righteousness of God and the nature of obedience and faithful following that is the heritage and the privilege of the people of God.

Christ in reflected glory, in anticipation, in the ritual life of the nation of Israel, in the ritual life of all those believers since the time Adam walked out of the garden and sacrifice, looking to God, recognizing spiritual truths began. We've seen those sacrifices beginning at that time in Genesis, the third and fourth chapters and on through the time of Noah, after Cain and Abel, the time of Abraham, culminating perhaps most vividly at Mount Moriah with the impending sacrifice of Isaac and then the wonderful grace of God providing a substitute in the form of a ram. And there is a connection there that we will take up this morning when we begin our further study of the sacrifices and the feasts that God prescribed for Israel.

But let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, what a wonderful comfort it is to be ever reminded that it is not by our might or our power that the fulfillment of Your plan and purpose for us is accomplished, but it is by the ever-present and ever-effective power and presence of Your Holy Spirit. We thank You for the gift that the Lord Jesus left us when He departed to rejoin You and take again His place in the heavenly realms, but in a new and glorified form representing us, both God and man.

We thank You for His love for us and His faithfulness to Your plan and purpose in saving us and entering us into this wonderful time of opportunity and potential between our salvation and our glorification in Him. We thank You for these truths that are expressed in Your Word in such a graphic and detailed way, and we pray that as we seek an understanding of them and through that study, a better understanding and appreciation for the Lord and for You, that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate our hearts, that it will be not just theology, but it will be practical and meaningful to us as we traverse the daily tasks and challenges that face us. We know that circumstances are to be met, that we live in this world even though we are not of it, and that we have a dual responsibility both to the material world and our spiritual identity in the immaterial realm in Christ.

We pray that this morning that each one here will be blessed and encouraged and strengthened through what we see from Your Word. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen. If you will turn in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 23, Leviticus chapter 23.

The first four letters of the name of that book are a big clue as to its content. This is material that pertains to the sons of Levi, to the priestly element in Israel, the priests and the Levites, specifically the sons of Aaron who himself was a Levite. It's not often remarked upon that

Moses was a Levite, an interesting come to pass since Moses was a Levite.

The new nation of Israel was not susceptible to turning Moses into its king because the kingly tribe is not Levi but Judah. And it would have been passingly strange if, as was the case in the birth of our nation when George Washington sort of led the colonial people and certainly its armies to victory and independence and the birth of a nation, General Washington became President Washington. And there was talk at the time that how close should the president be to a monarch? Should he be addressed as your highness and so on? If you've read the biography by Ron Chernow you know that there was great head scratching over how do we treat this guy and how do we keep from turning him into another King George? And there were opinions on all sides.

But you can see the easy transition from someone who is a leader in bringing you to the place you want to be of independence and nationhood being the natural choice to go on to be the federal head if you will. But God prevented that in two ways. First of all He ensured that Moses was born into the tribe of Levi and Aaron his brother is going to be the ongoing source of the priests, even Moses' descendants.

You know he's got Gershon and the others that were at issue when he tried to come back into Egypt and got stopped at the border because he had failed to obey in the seemingly minor detail of having his son circumcised and Zipporah is a big domestic squabble there and angel of the Lord coming and Moses nearly dies and that's quite the episode. He that is faithful in that which is least means something in Scripture. So there is this recognition that even the descendants of Moses are not going to be an ongoing revered Catholic or caste of some sort in the nation of Israel.

It is the sons of Aaron who will serve and they are Levites they are sons of descendants of Levi. Where from the blessing of Jacob to his sons upon his deathbed it is quite clear that Judah will be the ruling tribe and as Reuben forfeited his various privileges and opportunities as the firstborn they devolve onto various brothers that were younger than himself. Reuben ends up with nothing.

By his birth he should have had everything, the double portion, rulership, the priesthood in the family and he loses them all. Not because he ceased being the firstborn it was his decisions. Think about that.

Okay time's up. Now think about the difference between what the material circumstance conferred on Reuben. That's the earthly birth order right? He's the first Leah is the first to produce a son for Jacob.

He is the firstborn with all of the rights and privileges there unto pertaining. That's in the earthly realm right? How come he didn't end up getting all of those, in fact he didn't get any of them. How did that happen? Something in the moral realm, something in the immaterial realm, his attitude and his choices that led him to perpetrate actions which forfeited everything.

Forfeited his inheritance, forfeited his priesthood, forfeited his double portion, forfeited all of those things and they are passed on to others who have the attitude to bear the fruit of them. So the priesthood which begins as a family priesthood and becomes a national priesthood goes from Reuben, lands on Simeon. Simeon is not qualified so it goes to Levi.

Levi gets the priesthood. The rulership of the family is forfeited by Reuben, goes to Simeon. Simeon is still not qualified.

Simeon seems to be one with his older brother and doesn't get much of anything. Goes to Levi. Levi's got the priesthood so it skips him and goes to the fourth son Judah.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah. Judah gets the rulership. The double portion, and I'm not going to test my memory by trying to name all of the sons of Jacob in order, but suffice it to say that it pachinkos all the way down through the brothers to number 11, Joseph, who by the way is a firstborn of a sort.

He's a stealth firstborn. How is he a stealth firstborn? He was Joseph the firstborn. Who did all of the previous 10 sons come from? Either Leah or Bilhah or Zilpah.

But Rachel, the second wife, the last shall be first and the first shall be last. The second wife, her firstborn is Joseph, who is as you well know a tremendous type of Christ in so many respects. But he's sort of a stealth firstborn.

And he's not a stealth firstborn. And to him devolves the double portion. And look at what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplishes as Savior.

He is both the Messiah to Israel and the Savior of the rest of the world. He is the propitiation not only for the sins of the nation and family of God, but for the whole world. So you have this interplay between the physical realm and the spiritual realm.

That's what we looked at last time. Think back. Back before Friday, before Thursday, before Tuesday, before Monday.

Think back to last Sunday. What did we look at? We were looking at the calendar. How many calendars in Israel? Two calendars.

When did that start? Just as they're leaving Egypt in the Exodus and specifically on the night of Passover. Passover and God says, I'm giving you a new calendar. This is the birth of your nation and there is this progressive sort of birth.

It's very interesting that God said 14 Nisan, this month of Abib or Nisan is now going to be your first month, but He didn't reset the days. He didn't say Passover is now day one of month one. This is still the fourteenth day.

Two sevens. It's the fourteenth day. We're not changing that.

We're just going to say that this is the first month instead of the seventh month. Seventh month becomes the first month. And that sets in motion then a series of feasts which you can see detailed in Leviticus chapter 23.

Here is the outline of the weekly, the monthly, the yearly sequence of events and special days in Israel. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to the children of Israel and say to them the feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations. These are My feasts.

My feasts. They have divine pertinence. They have divine meaning.

They partake of God. They reflect God. So in our study of feasts as a part of our study of Christ and the sacrifices, we want to be watching for those divine expressions.

God says these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of solemn rest, a holy convocation. Implicit in this as we've seen when we looked back at the Ten Commandments, it seems to me there's actually eleven commandments because God says six days thou shalt work.

Just as all the thou shalt nots and the honor your father and mother, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, tells us that six days you will work. Honor your father and mother. It's a positive command.

Have no other gods before me. It's a positive command. And work for six days is a positive command.

Six days work shall be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

Remember now what I said at the beginning, the Old Testament is descriptive for us, not prescriptive. If you want to mow your lawn on a Sunday afternoon, you can because we are not calendar Sabbatarians. We are soul Sabbatarians.

We now have freedom in Christ to figure out when our Sabbath is. It doesn't excuse us from the responsibility to work, but it does tell us that as we work we are to watch for those times when we will rest. What is the purpose of the Sabbath? To reflect as God did on His work.

If He's going to stop one part in seven and reflect on His work, we should stop at some similar proportion and reflect on God's work. So six days shall work be done, the seventh is a Sabbath of solemn rest. Not just rest, but there is solemnity, there is a spiritual aspect to this rest.

You don't say well is it mattress or hammock when you are talking about solemn, solemnity. Solemnity says we are looking up, we are looking beyond, we are looking to the immaterial. Solemn rest, holy convocation.

What is a convocation? What does con mean as a prefix? You have concord, you have accord together. Con means with in Latin. So convocation, this is something that is recognized in the

community in Israel.

This is why we have church on a Sunday morning on a weekly basis. We convoke, we convocate, we have a convocation. You shall do no work, it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

So that's the weekly pattern. Six days of work, seventh day of rest. These are the feasts, verse 4, of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.

God makes appointments. This is what the word moed means in Hebrew. It is an appointment.

The word translated feast means appointment. These are the appointments at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.

It is no accident that it says the Lord's Passover. These are my feasts. This is the authority that invokes them.

Have you noticed how there are certain holidays that are on our calendar? Fourth of July, Labor Day, Memorial Day, Christmas, etc. How do those get to be there? You wonder how did things get to be the way they are? We figured out last night that the executive mansion wasn't formally called the White House until a hundred years after people moved in. It was the executive mansion in Washington D.C. for a century and it wasn't until my favorite president put the White House on his stationery in 1901 that it formally became the White House and it has been called that ever since.

Well, how do things get to be? How does something get to be on the calendar? You know they've tried, and you know I'll probably get in trouble at some quarter here, but they've tried to make Kwanzaa a thing on the calendar. Well, unless and until somebody with authority to say this goes on the calendar makes it a feast or Cinco de Mayo or Bastille Day or who knows what all, the day that Marie Antoinette got her head chopped off. If you just want to declare, they have Mother's Day and Father's Day and those are recognized as, they're not federal holidays, but they're holidays.

Who decides whether it's a federal holiday or not? You get off work. We have Martin Luther King Day, Martin Luther King, wonderful Baptist pastor, great guy, but somebody had to say we're going to have a day for Martin Luther King. It had to be authorized at some point.

They got Grandparents Day. They got Grandma's Day and Grandpa's Day and they've got, you know, Secretary's Day and Boss's Day. Well, these are all informal and they haven't attained to something that gets put on the calendar in terms of any kind of meaningful stopping the mail or whatever.

Why? It's a matter of authority. It's a matter of authority. Who says what's a holiday? Who says this is prescriptive? God does.

This is the description of the Lord's Feast. This is the Lord's Passover. We sometimes, as we're

blowing through life day by day, pretty much are our own authority.

We decide when we're going to go and we decide when we're going to stop. We decide what we're going to honor and what we are going to ignore. I have faithfully and diligently ignored whatever it is that happens on the American Idol show.

I gather from the commercials, which I also try to avoid, that there is some sort of a, I guess everybody sings on that show. I don't know if they have any other talents. I haven't seen anybody doing the buck and wing or balancing parasols on their nose or anything.

They all seem to be singing. And there seem to be two or three of these shows. I think there's another one about the voice and there could be others I really don't know.

But I faithfully and diligently ignored. I don't know if they ever pick somebody and say, okay, you're the final one. You're the big king of the world for this season.

I assume they do. It seems to be some sort of an elimination process. And apparently, I do know that there's a gal that makes CDs now and she was evidently the winner of that at some past time.

I don't remember her name. I don't know what she sings. But I vaguely remember that some gal actually made a career.

I think they've had, I don't know, 12 or 15, 17, 19, 20 seasons of that thing and I can only, am aware of one person that actually made it to commercial success. But whatever. Somebody proclaimed that person to be the American Idol and the show did, I guess.

Do people vote, call in or something? It seems to me like there's some kind of popular way to let you tweet or something. Point here is that you can say that a thing is so on your own authority. Somebody else can say that this is the American Idol.

I don't say they're the American Idol. I don't know who they are. I don't know why they're here and I don't care.

And so for me, it does not pertain. It is as meaningless as the mayoral election in Pattaya Beach, Thailand. I don't know who's the mayor and I don't care.

I just don't care. I assign it no weight. There are things that we have authority over and what we have to be careful of is that we don't begin to exercise that personal authority on things where God says, no, sorry, I have authority here.

And this is what I say. It's an easy thing to extend the pattern of our authority and say, well, I don't have to do that because I'm special. I don't have to do that because I'm not convinced that I need to do it.

Doesn't matter what we think or what we are convinced of. God has claimed divine authority

over certain things that pertain to material human life. And this is one of them, especially in Israel.

These are the feasts of the Lord. It is the Lord's Passover. Verse 6, Leviticus 23, on the 15th day of the same month, one day later, is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord.

Passover is the Lord's. The feast of unleavened bread is to the Lord. Seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

So you now have an eight-day commemoration. Fourteenth is Passover and then seven following days is the feast of unleavened bread. On the first day, you have a holy convocation.

You shall do no customary work on it. So Passover is a high holy day and the first day of the feast of unleavened bread is also a high holy day. In both of those, you are to do no ordinary work.

You shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.

So there is a Sabbath at the first day and a Sabbath on the seventh day of the feast of unleavened bread. This is why the Lord Jesus was in the tomb undisturbed for two days, because being crucified on Thursday and going into the tomb Thursday evening, Friday was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, 15 Nisan. Nobody could go to the tomb.

Nobody could have the stone rolled away. Nobody could carry additional herbs and spices or do any attending of His body. It was a Sabbath.

This is the reason they were trying to hurry up and get the three men on crosses dead before sundown on 14 Nisan and they broke the legs of the two thieves so that they could get them down off the cross and everybody could be finished with the disposition of the bodies before that feast of unleavened bread Sabbath began. So when they said the next day was a Sabbath and they had to get the bodies down, it's not the Saturday Sabbath, it's the Friday Sabbath. And not understanding that simple detail has been responsible for no end of goofiness about Good Friday.

It's Good Thursday. Jesus was manifestly crucified on Thursday, 14 Nisan, in the tomb, Friday, 15 Nisan, first day of the feast of unleavened bread, and then again on the regular Saturday Sabbath in which similarly there could be no work done. And the first opportunity that the ladies had to go back to the tomb was the first day of the week, Sunday, which was the third day of the, I'm sorry, the second day of the feast, no, it's the third day of the feast of unleavened bread.

So that's what's being detailed here. Offerings made by fire to the Lord for seven days. Offerings made by fire.

What does fire represent universally in Scripture? It starts with a J and ends with judgment. Judgment, fire, judgment, always judged by fire. It is a period of judgment, feast of unleavened bread.

You are to find and eliminate the leaven. Get the leaven out and offerings made by fire. Go before God.

It is all about recognizing the presence of sin and judgment on sin by God. It is God's feast. It's God's opinion that counts.

It's God's authority to declare and decide this is iniquity and this is not. This is evil and this is not. This is wrong and this is not.

It is God who has the authority to determine these things. There's a huge movement in the modern Christian church that we'll all get together and decide what's right and wrong. It's okay for kids in their late teens to shack up together.

It's okay to interrupt God's creative processes when there is a pregnancy underway. It's okay to welcome and embrace and celebrate people who are declared, manifest, and out of the closet perverts. It's okay we will, it's all in the name of love.

We will decide what righteousness is. You don't have the authority. You can't say this is Sam Hall Day and I expect all work to cease and the mail to stop.

I don't have the authority to make my day a holiday. And believers in the Lord Jesus Christ today do not have the authority to declare and decide what is righteous and what is not. God has that authority.

God claims it for Himself and it is a sin of the high hand to tell God, no, your standard doesn't count. My standard counts. And I will excise and ignore the parts of your word that disagree with my idea of what is right and wrong.

That is a perilous course and please let me know when you do that so that I can stand at a safe distance. Any of us that do that are going to suffer the wrath of God that comes upon the sons of disobedience. Are they children? Yes.

Are they disobedient? Yes. Are they coming under judgment by fire? Yes. And I've got enough to account for without standing too close to anybody that's in that category.

So, it is important. Think about it. What is the point of application here as we come up on our break? What do we think about and apply from the feasts of the Lord? It is important for us to identify those things where God has authority.

He has given us great freedom. Has God said how churches should assemble and organize and run? Has He specified an order of worship for us? Has He given the level of detail for worship that He gave to Israel to the church? He has not. He has said, look, get together.

When you come together, sing. Let there be teaching of the Word. And that's about it.

And it should be done decently and in good order and there should be somebody in charge. God has gifted some people with the ability to communicate from His Word. Listen to those guys.

And that's about it. You can meet in a church. You can meet in a barn.

You can meet in a church house. You can meet in somebody's house. You can meet outside.

You can meet in a tent. You can sit in front of a computer in this day. As long as there are those elements prescribed in Scripture satisfied, which is fellowship, singing.

You know, there's a reason why we are so grateful to have music ministry in our church. It is prescribed. God says, don't meet without it.

The Lord Jesus Himself, one of the last things He did before He went to the cross was what? He sung a hymn with the disciples. We know for a fact that the Lord Jesus sang. It tells us so.

And on the most important night of His life, the night before His crucifixion, He sang a hymn with His disciples. It's no small thing. Don't take lightly when each one comes together with a song, a hymn or a spiritual song.

Three different kinds are specified. We don't have that much specification for what gets taught. It doesn't say, be sure you preach something from the Old Testament and something from the New Testament.

Be sure you preach something from the Law, something from the prophets and something from the writings. But He does say, when you come together, songs and hymns and spiritual songs. Psalm are those that are contained in the Psalter, that collection from the Old Testament.

And they are reflected in great quantities in the hymns like of Isaac Watts and these others, where the words of the Psalms have been rendered into poetic beauty in our language. And it's a great privilege to sing those and to have them in our hearts. Not just the vocal singing.

It's not any more of a ritualistic deed than any other. It is our hearts where we celebrate. So, application.

We need to think. Where has God gone? Where has God prescribed things that are in His domain and under His authority? And are we satisfying those requirements? He says, work. And it's a transcendent command.

Work in the Old Testament. Work in the New Testament. You need to find a way to support yourself.

If you're not a minor and not a child, then support yourself. Work. That's what work does.

You support yourself and hopefully you can support others. Rest is a command. And in that rest, have solemnity.

Have holy convocation. Use that time to assemble with other believers and celebrate God. It's not enough to go fishing.

Well, this is my church. That's not a convocation. Me and the fish? Doesn't count.

Me and the birds and the golden sunrise? Any of those things. Any godless, atheist, communist could do that. It is a convocation with others who share an appreciation for God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, these are things that we have to take seriously. There are not very many prescriptions for the New Testament. But these things are given to us under God's authority and in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, we observe them. These feasts are on the spiritual calendar, are they not? They start in the month of Abib, Nisan, and they go forward counting from. Isn't it interesting that as you go from Passover and then the Feast of Unleavened Bread, you have first fruits in there as well.

You have kind of a double whammy on the 15th of Nisan. It is the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and it is the Sabbath after, however many days it is. Whenever Passover 14 and 15 fall, you go to the Sabbath and the day after the Sabbath is a feast and it is the Feast of First Fruits.

It's always a Sunday. In the week that the Lord was crucified, it was the third day after His death. And it is Resurrection Day, it is First Fruits Day.

But then you begin counting from that day 50 days. You count 49 days, which are the Sabbaths. You have seven Sabbaths and then the 50th day is the Day of Pentecost.

Interestingly, if I gave you a pop quiz right now, last quiz right before we break up here for coffee. What is Pentecost the birthday of? Quick, quick. What's Pentecost the birthday of? It's the church, right? Guess what? It is also the birthday of Israel.

Pentecost is the day the law came down and Israel said, All thou has said we will do. It's a double birthday. It's a double whammy.

Read the rabbis. Read the Talmudic scholars. Read all of the rabbinical literature.

Israel recognizes its birthday as Pentecost. Pentecost is the birthday of the nation. They were born as a people and rescued and delivered from slavery on Passover, but it is the law that defines the nation.

It is the law that enters them into covenant relationship with God as a people and as a nation. And the birthday of Israel is Pentecost, just as the birthday of the church is Pentecost. And that is the beginning.

Then you've got that long summer hiatus. What's going to happen? How are the crops going to grow? What's going to take place? Then you come to the first of the fall feasts on the first day of what used to be the first month, Rosh Hashanah, the head of the old year. Rosh Hashanah, the feast of trumpets.

And that's what we will begin to look at when we come back from our break.