

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-09-20a

This is September the 20th, 2015. We are looking at the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed and finds explication and revelation in the Old Testament adumbrations and foreshadowings and anticipations, specifically in the sacrificial system that has been a part of relationship with God for human beings since the very beginning. We have noted a number of prominent features that are common to all animal sacrifices.

We have seen that there is a purpose in its shock value, if you will, in the stark and in many ways tragic nature of its execution. Mercifully, in my view, for us, we look at this historically rather than methodologically or experientially. We do not perform animal sacrifices today, nor, by the way, does Judaism.

Even though we are the two faiths that believe the book of Leviticus is the inspired Word of God, neither Judaism nor Christianity practices animal sacrifice. If I was a Baptist, you know, all God's people said, Amen. We're happy for that.

However, it doesn't change the purpose, the nature, or the function of that system. And that's what we are undertaking to study and to improve our understanding of, to see the meaning and the purpose. These things were written for our instruction and we want to be sure that we learn the lesson, that we get a grasp on and a hold on the truth.

We'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then we will resume our study of the whole burnt offering in Leviticus chapter 1. Father, what a privilege it is for us to identify ourselves as your children, to know that we are related to you through Jesus Christ now and for all eternity. We thank you for the deliverance that you have provided for us from our fallen nature, from our inabilities and our weaknesses. We know that as with many things that are depicted in your Word, this is a process.

We know when we fail and when we fall short, this is provided for through the cleansing blood of Christ as we acknowledge our sins. And we thank you for your faithfulness and your righteousness in forgiving us in the light of His work on our behalf and in the light of our union with Him and the wonderful privileges that you've bestowed on us through Him. We see the Lord Jesus reflected here in these Old Testament pages and we ask that as we try to gain a better understanding and a greater appreciation for the Lord Jesus through these pages, that God the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts, give us clarity and understanding, reveal to us not merely the details and the physicality of these offerings, but the higher and greater truths that they reflect.

We know that as we gain an appreciation for the Lord Jesus, it draws us closer to you. It enables us to be more thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

Leviticus chapter 1. There are a number of things in the book of Leviticus that teach us about

God and relationship with God. These include the sacrificial system, the sacrifices. It includes the feasts.

It includes the priesthood. It includes the high priest. Of the many things that you can discern in Leviticus, these are ones that enable us to understand relationship with God.

These things are used in a symbolic and a typological fashion. But what is it really talking about? Ask yourself the question. It's just a four-word question.

What is going on? Why all of the rigmarole? Why can't God just rain manna down on these people, get them to the promised land, give them some land, give them some sheep, drop some rain on them and let them go? Why the burden? Why the attrition from their herds and from their crops? They're going to bring in the sheep for the first fruits. Think about the man hours involved. Have you ever thought about how many man hours are wasted in places like doctors' waiting rooms? I say waiting is plural because you get there and you wait.

And then, okay, now that you've had the preliminary, go sit and wait some more. Have you thought about the waiting in airports? People waiting. Well, your flight has been delayed.

Look around at the number of people and multiply the number of hours of productive work that is not being accomplished despite the fact that everybody is staring into a square screen. They're not getting the work done that they would get done if they were where they should be doing what they're supposed to do. Instead, they're stuck.

Jury duty. How many people have been on jury duty? How much time is wasted there? Look around. A couple of thousand people in every county courthouse in the nation sitting around waiting all day long to see if maybe they're going to be picked for a jury and 95% of them are not.

As soon as they find out you're a Christian, you're probably off. So, you know, wear a cross if you want to get back home, you know, wear a Marine Corps ball cap. That usually gets you released.

They don't want to see anybody of a conservative stripe in there. So, you know, take steps accordingly. But look at the amount of time that is wasted.

Now you think about all of the Israelites, all of them beginning in the days in the wilderness going forward. Look at the labor intensive nature of this sacrificial system. Look at the cost in terms of animals and in terms of time to get there.

The assembly feasts three times a year. People have got to take off from all of their usual business, travel down to Jerusalem. This is once they're in the land.

Go to the temple for the three assembly feasts. Huge investment of time, is it not? I mean, any way you slice this, this is an enormous undertaking to fulfill the requirements of the law. Got to

go find some birds.

Even if you're poor, you've got to scrape together enough to either trap or buy birds that you can bring down for sacrifice. So here's my question. Why? What is going on? Is it just, this, let me give you the secular view.

See there's this group of guys and they want power. They want control. They find fulfillment in being the big cheese and the top dog and the head of things.

And they want to aggrandize themselves and be looked up to and feted and treated as special so they invented this system. They made everybody come down and bring all of their stuff. I mean seriously, do you think just because some guys want to be, think about all the karaoke singers who want to be a star.

Just wanting a thing doesn't make it so, does it? And do you seriously think that people are just going to say, oh well, if you say I should bring my animals down here, if you say you've written a book, do you seriously think people could convince other people to fall in line under such a goofy system? No. It doesn't work even in communism and socialism either. How does communism and socialism get people to follow the system? Brute force and violence.

Look at Stalin, look at Lenin, look at Pol Pot, look at Ho Chi Minh. If you want to get that system going, people are not just going to stick their hands up and say, oh fine, I'll work in a collective for the greater good and I'll let the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, sure, great, that all sounds good to me. Very few true believers in that system.

Most of them are coerced by force. Now, who was coerced by force in the Levitical system? Nobody. The worst penalty you could suffer from not following these things is to be sent outside the camp.

If you don't want to be a part of the community and do what the community does, leave. There's no death penalty for not bringing the sacrifices, there's no death penalty for not observing a feast, other than the night of Passover, and if you're a firstborn, there's no death penalty for observing Passover. Why? What is going on? The reality of relationship with God was experienced by these people.

They knew it. They recognized it. And the compulsion, the motivation is personal.

People who, now I'm not talking about all the people who flaked off. I constantly hear, you know, people judge Christianity by Christians, but look at all the Christians that aren't living as Christians. Look at all the Catholics.

Let's go back to the, let's go 900 years back to the Inquisition. Look at the Inquisition. People try to hang the dead chicken of the Inquisition around your neck because you're a Christian.

Let me just explain about three things right quick. Anytime somebody says Inquisition, you

might as well just say, well, Hitler. You know, that's, you know a thing has fallen off the edge of the table whenever somebody says, well, you're just like Hitler.

Anytime somebody mentions the Inquisition, remember three things quickly. A, what was the Inquisition? Most people who throw it at you don't even know what it was. Do you know what the Inquisition was? Back in the 12th century and for some decades afterward, the Catholic Church, I say again, the Catholic Church went on a witch hunt for heresy.

They didn't want heresy in the Catholic Church, and they went to all kinds of extreme and violent measures to inquire, to inquisit, professing Catholics. The Catholics didn't suit up and grab swords and go out and say, all right, you atheists, you know, convert or die, as Islam has done over the centuries. The Inquisition was internal.

If you said you were a Catholic, but the Catholics felt like you weren't acting right, they would go put you in there and do all kinds of heinous things. Was it horribly wrong? Was it a reflection of the darkest, deepest recesses of corrupt human nature? Yes, it was. Was it a terrible, heinous thing? Yes, it was.

But A, it was Catholic on Catholic violence only. B, it was Catholics. And C, I believe we had a little thing called the Reformation, and you and I are not Catholics.

One of many reasons why there was a Reformation is people looked at that and said, that ain't right. I don't hold with that. I don't agree with that, and a host of other things this quote-unquote Church of Christ is doing, this quote-unquote, you know, Catholic means universal, the universal church.

You purport to represent genuine biblical Christianity, but you've got a Pope and you've got all this other stuff that's going on that's not in the Bible. I don't hold with that. And after Martin Luther wrote the 95 Theses, there's, it's almost certain that he did not nail them to the Wittenberg door, by the way.

That's an apocryphal story. But he did write them, and they did circulate, and they rapidly gained popularity because a bunch of people stuck their heads up and said, yeah, I don't think this Catholic Church business is biblical or right. And with the spread of Scripture and access to the Scripture, people recognized that the man-made edifice and institution of the Catholic Church was wrong, wrong-headed, and didn't reflect biblical truth, and they separated from it.

You and I are in that strand. So next time somebody says Inquisition, tell them, you don't know what you're talking about. Google the Inquisition sometime, and come back when you've got a cogent argument in this debate.

Anyway, I say all that to say this. There is a genuine recognition of relationship with God. There were genuine, faithful Israelites who, when they participated in this ritual system, understood that it spoke of higher things.

That's who we're concentrating on. That's who we want to be like. Many people can claim the name of Christian in the same way that many people can claim to be good drivers.

It doesn't mean they are. And by the way, the fact that more people die on the highways and roads of the United States than from almost any other cause doesn't mean that cars are evil. It means that people are misusing the privilege of driving a car, that they are mishandling, that they are not following the right procedures and observing the right priorities when they drive.

If you have your phone in your hand while you are driving, you are 13 times more likely to have a wreck. It is amazing to me that we've had cars for 100 years. And we managed to go from point A to point B in a car without talking to somebody on the phone, without texting somebody, without having to check.

If you have to use Google Map or something, turn the thing on voice, stick it someplace out of reach, and wait until you get there. I don't often do this, but I will tell you from the Word of God, it is irresponsible to endanger yourself and others for such a foolish thing as, I can't wait to tell this person something. I've got to do it right now while I'm driving.

Don't be a danger to yourself and others. Cars are wonderful things. The privilege of getting ourselves from point A to point B is wonderful.

Don't make it a dangerous enterprise by trying to do two things at once that are not compatible. I don't understand why they put digital displays in cars at all. Your radio ought to have a knob that you can find and turn without taking your eyes off the road the way they used to be.

And when I buy a radio for my car, I get one with a knob, so I don't have to take my eyes off the road even if I want to hear, talk radio, or try to redeem the time in some way, get something going on in my mind while I'm driving. That's fine, but my eyes are on the road. And these heads-up panels and all the rest of it, you have to look away from the road.

What are they thinking? No wonder that there's never been a higher rate of traffic deaths than there is right now. And people think that they can get in the fast lane and drive 40, and because everybody else in front of them is going fast, the way God intended in a passing lane, and they're doing 40, they have time to react. There won't be anybody right in front of them, and so they'll go to the far left lane and text.

And this happens all up and down Central every day, coming and going, morning rush hour, For what? I told you the story. My first texting story was that cosmetic surgeon that was out in California with his dog and his convertible, beautiful day, driving up the Pacific Coast Highway, texting, posting it to his blog, and his blog ends right in the middle of a sentence because he ran off the road over a cliff, killed himself, totaled his car. His dog did survive because it was a convertible, and the dog wisely jumped out as the thing went over the cliff.

But here's a guy that's got everything. He's in California. He's rich.

He's cruising along in an expensive convertible, got God's greatest scenery in front of him there. The Pacific Coast is gorgeous, if you've ever driven it, and sacrificed it all because he couldn't wait to tell somebody something on his phone. It's just nuts.

Don't be pulled by the nose the way the rest of the culture is, that you can't do anything without letting everybody know. You can't, if you absolutely must tell somebody something, pull over. That's my diatribe, and I feel much better having gotten it off my chest.

The Jews today do not follow the Levitical system, but they study it the way we do. Ancient Israelites, who were not mishandling the system, who weren't driving the car badly, reflected their love for God and their desire to be faithful and obedient by following these rituals, and it's important. It was one of several things.

As I say, it wasn't just the sacrificial system, also the feasts, a different kind of communication. Looking at the priests and their special qualifications, their special instructions, their special functions, and then especially among the priests, the high priest. He is unique and is different than all other priests.

And by observing these things, not to mention a fifth one of these would be the civil code. When you look at the Law of Moses, there are things that reflect the moral code, the thou shalt nots and the thou shalts, adultery is morally wrong, covetousness is morally wrong, treating God and His name as a common thing is morally wrong, failing to honor your father and mother is morally wrong, failing to recognize that you need to not only work hard, but take time off from work, stop everything, and cultivate and reflect upon your relationship with God. Remember the Sabbath day.

It's morally wrong to blow through life with no attention to your standing, your covenant relationship with God, ever much more so us being related directly to Him through Christ. We are Christ's body on earth. And to fail to stop and spend some quality time reflecting, reviewing, praying, analyzing, examining ourselves, acknowledging our sins, looking at the various areas where we have responsibilities and seeing if we are doing those as under the Lord, failure to do that is violating the remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy commandment.

It's not a matter of watching the calendar, it is a matter of watching our hearts. So people who did that, the good drivers if you will, the ones who were seeking relationship with God through Christ, and you can list many, many examples in Scripture all the way through, these are the ones who understood what we are attempting to understand. Leviticus chapter 1 verse 1, now the Lord called to Moses, this by the way is the third time that God called to Moses.

It's the third time Scripture says God called to Him. The first time was at the burning bush, the second time was at Sinai when He called him to the mountain to receive the commandments. It says in both places that God called to Moses.

This is the third time, it's important. "...called to him and spoke to him from the tabernacle of

meeting, saying..." The first time, where did He call from? The bush. The second time, where did He call from? The mountain.

The third time? The tabernacle. No accident, there is a progression there. "...speak to the children of Israel, say to them, when any of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock, of the herd and of the flock." We now have a pretty good grip on that, don't we? We know what it means to have an animal from the herd, we know the difference in significance of an animal from the flock.

"...if his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish, he shall offer it, and it says, of his own free will." This is an interesting word. If you look this up in the Tanakh, the JPS, Jewish Publications Society translation, if you look in some of your newer English translations, it does not say, of his own free will. It says, for acceptance, to be accepted.

This is the word, Ratsah, and it is probably better translated, to be accepted. It does not take away from the free will idea, but there is no word for free, there is no word for volition or choice or will. Ratsah has the idea that if you want to be accepted maybe you do, maybe you don't.

Maybe there is an occasion where you want to affirm or confirm that desire, that motivation, that attitude. So, is it of your own free will? Yes, because this is not prescribed, you know, once a year thou shalt bring the whole burnt offering, once a month, once a week, you'd quickly go broke once a week, you'd run through animals in no time. This is truly a free will offering.

As a man purposes in his heart, so let him give. Not grudgingly, not out of necessity, God loves a cheerful giver. This is the Old Testament equivalent of that.

Now, why would you not grudgingly and not out of necessity give? Because you want to be accepted. You want to participate. You want to be in alignment with and in harmony with God, His plan, His purpose.

You want to reflect your understanding. Older children in the household see their parents undertaking a thing and when they voluntarily pitch in to help, what a blessing and how gratifying it is for a parent to see that a child has that outward looking not so much for myself, but in the interest of the family, because I love my parents, because I have the means, motive and opportunity here, but I wasn't asked, I wasn't coerced, I wasn't frowned upon for not, I just chose to do it. This is what God is looking for in the whole burnt offering, to be accepted, to reflect that desire for and enjoyment of relationship with God.

So it means both. But the fundamental meaning of the word is for acceptance, to be accepted. It is a reflection of having been accepted.

Make sense? Not prescribed, it wouldn't be meaningful if it was prescribed. The whole purpose of this provision is to express something that is voluntary and something that is a desire of the heart that isn't by command. So when you choose to do this, here's how to do it.

That's the meaning. He shall put His hand on the head of the burnt offering. They actually have a name for this.

It's called Simakah in the Hebrew tradition. And this identification is at the very center of the ritual. This is me.

Identifying with the animal, this is not, as might be the case in another sacrifice, the transfer of sin. My sin is sort of flowing to this substitutionary atoning sacrifice, a redemptive sacrifice. This is identification.

And you get the idea that this might be what the author of Hebrews, who I think was Paul, says in Hebrews 6, not laying again the foundation. Let us go on to maturity, to completeness, to perfection. Let us go on.

Not laying again the foundation of repentance away from dead works and faith toward God. Then he goes on to talk about baptisms and the laying on of hands. Laying on of hands is identification.

If they were going to send out missionaries, they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas. They would lay hands on someone by way of commissioning. Still do that in a lot of ordination services today, laying hands on.

Identification with union, unity. Lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He brings it for acceptance.

It will be accepted. See the link? His desire is to be accepted. If he does this, it will be accepted.

There is a way to acceptance. There is a way to fellowship. God has made a way.

It requires humility. It requires a subordinate or an attitude that isn't full of hubris or, well, why can't I do it my way? This goes all the way back to Cain and Abel as we saw. Cain says, well, I'm going to bring a sacrifice, but I'm going to sing along with Paul Anka and Frank Sinatra.

I did it my way. I ate it up and spit it out. I was up, I was down, but I did it my way.

Well, good luck with that. This is God's way. It is either God's way or it's the broad way and the wide gate.

You know where that leads. But if you do this, if you follow God's straightforward, it's not taxing. It isn't difficult.

Even if you're poor, we're going to see there is a way to do this. All you have to do is do it God's way. But of course, that requires a certain kind of attitude.

And this is a filter. It isn't all the way up in heaven that you've got to fly up there. It isn't down in the depths that you've got to dig down there.

It is near. It is simple, but it is prescribed. And in following the prescribed steps, you reflect acknowledgment.

I am not good enough. My plan isn't going to cut it. I yield.

I submit myself. I humble myself under the mighty hand of God. There's people that just can't do this.

I just really think that, you know, I've got enough quality of my own that this isn't necessary for me. You can take that road. However, what seems good to a man in the short term is going to be the ways of death in the long term.

And sometimes we find this out the easy way. Sometimes we find it out the hard way. This is submission to the plan and will of God.

It will be accepted on behalf to make atonement for Him. Kippar, kaphar, these are the words in Hebrew. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see something very interesting about this word. I will pitch you the meaning when we return.