

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-09-27b

We pick up our study now in Leviticus chapter 1. We are endeavoring to conclude our look at the first of the Levitical offerings, the whole burnt offering. There is significance in the fact that this one is given first. As I said, it was the most common offering perhaps in Israel and was also the one with the most historic roots.

And because of this, the instructions in Leviticus are not an innovation. This isn't a new revelation and people say, oh, a whole burnt offering, what's that? They're experienced with this. They're familiar with it.

It has a long cultural history and a theological significance to those who are at all theologically sensitive. So what was that meaning? What did it connote? What did it actually convey in terms of spiritual significance to the people of God? Well, if you look at the occasions on which it had been offered in the past, this would be a clue. It was an expression of desire to approach God and to be pleasing in God's sight, first and foremost.

And we get this, again, reviewing what we learned when we saw Abel offering this sacrifice. Why did he do it? Why would he do it? You could see that perhaps there was some thankfulness involved, that his flocks have prospered. He brings the firstlings, meaning that there were many more where those came from, and the fat thereof, the best of them, and they are prosperous, they're well-fed, and these are the very best.

And Abel recognizes that this is from God, and without God's blessing and without God's presence, his life really doesn't have much meaning. And so he brings the fruit of his efforts before God. What would it mean to us? Does our life have meaning? Do our efforts and our endeavors have meaning? The fruit of our daily labors, what does it all mean? Well, if you're a secularist, if you're a materialist, if you are somebody who partakes of the common view of the world today, it only means what you want it to mean, and it's basically self-gratification, because ultimately it all perishes with the using.

The form of this world is passing away. What people struggled with and all of their ups and downs in past years, decades ago, 150 years ago, the middle of the 1800s, before and after the Civil War, we read about it in history books, but the individual lives and deaths of the vast majority of people are unknown to us. You may even know your three great-grandpa and grandma.

You might know their name. You might know where they lived and when they traveled and at what point they had their children, but the details of their daily life, what they struggled with, what they were good at, what they argued over, what they considered important, the things that drove them, many of their issues and challenges are unknown. It's all over with.

They've perished and returned to the dust from which they were taken, and it's all at this point known but to God, unless they kept a detailed diary, and very few of them did. The vast majority

of people, it's the oft-quoted Shakespearean line, you know, life's a poor player, strutting his hour upon the stage, gesticulating sound and fury, signifying nothing. You can strut and fret your hour, but at the end of the day, what does it all mean? Well, to the vast majority lay it before God, to present it to God is to have as one of your objects, to have it be recognized and remembered in eternal realms.

Why would you send something up in smoke? Why would you incinerate it before the Lord? Well, if this is the substance of your thanksgiving, if this is the substance of your appreciation, if this is the substance of your recognition and your desire to be pleasing in God's sight, and it is rendered into an invisible form, an ascending form that leaves this earth and goes to wherever it is God is, what are you doing? You are affirming your belief in the invisible realm, in the invisible God and in His power to take what is mortal and earthly and transient and mundane and convert it, raise it, make it eternal. This is what the whole burnt offering is all about. I believe that my life is only significant as I come before God and as God accepts the best of it and the fruit of it and takes it to His realm where the more spiritually sensitive Israelites realized, I will someday be.

I will too dissolve and put off this mortal form and rise to see my Redeemer in the flesh as Job says. Matthew reminded me on the break and I had thought of it earlier this week about talking about representative. You think about Job and you think about the offerings that he offered on behalf of his children and later on at the end of the book he offers on behalf of his friends at God's command.

God says to Elihu and to Bildad, you know, you guys need to go let Job represent you before me with offerings, representative priestly function. And isn't it interesting that here in these Levitical offerings we have that aspect, the interplay, the interleaving of the offerer's participation and the priest's participation. We looked at this in some detail last time.

You remember the three things that the offerer did and the three things that the priest did? We actually have two presentations for each of these sacrifices. We look at Leviticus chapter 1 here, but we have another set of instructions in Leviticus. Keep your finger here in Leviticus chapter 1 and turn over to Leviticus chapter 6. We'll get to chapter 7, but Leviticus chapter 6. Now we've been looking at some detail in Leviticus chapter 1, right? When a man wants to bring the whole burnt offering this is what he does, this is what the priest does.

But we have a second set of instructions about this offering in Leviticus chapter 6. Look at verse 8. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Command Aaron and his sons saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment and his linen trousers he shall put on his body, and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.

Then he'll take those special clothes, takes the ashes from inside the altar and puts them outside the altar. Then he takes those clothes off. These are ash removal clothes.

Puts them on, gets the ashes from inside, takes them outside. Then he's got to take those garments off, put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be put out.

And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it, and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. A fire shall always be burning on the altar, it shall never go out." Supplementary instructions about the whole burnt offering that we're looking at in chapter 1. What do you notice about this? Anything sort of stand out in terms of these instructions? Who is addressed here in Leviticus chapter 6? The Lord spoke to Moses saying, command who? This is not to the children of Israel, is it? This is the priestly side. Leviticus chapter 1 tells the offeror, this is what you're going to do and this is what the priest is going to do for you.

Leviticus chapter 6, this is the law for the priests regarding this particular offering. And as you look at the headings that follow it, you will see into chapter 7, you have a law for the grain offering, the law for the sin offering, the law for the trespass offering, the law of peace offerings. So these are the regulations, the ordinances for the priests, their side of it.

So for each of these offerings we look at both sides. We look at the offeror's side, we look at the priest's side. It is a cooperation.

They are not brought before the Lord without the action of the priests who are maintaining the place of the offering, who are performing specific functions. Now, ask yourself this question, why does the priest have a special garment and special pants to put on to get the ashes out of the altar and to put them outside the altar? And then why does he have to change his clothes to pick up those same ashes and take them outside the camp to a clean place? By the way, how do you identify a clean place outside the camp? What's the difference in a clean place and an unclean place? Does the Bible talk at all, does the law of Moses talk at all about what defiles and what makes a place or a person or a thing unclean? In other words, if there's a trash dump where people are putting yesterday's soup bones and leftover barley and beans and whatever else is out there in the garbage, you don't take the ashes from the altar and put them in the garbage place for the camp. You know how many people, I mean you can imagine there are many, many people in this camp as it moves for the 40 years of wandering.

And later on in the temple there's a lot of people in Jerusalem and there's going to be a lot of waste. This is one of the things, by the way, that archaeologists look for in the wilderness wanderings, where are the trash dumps? And when it says that Israel camped at Mahanaim or they camped here or there in their wanderings, we should be able to archaeologically find the trash dump. And we haven't, therefore there were no wilderness wanderings.

Well, I'm not going to diverge on that except to say that I defy you to find the trash dumps for Julius Caesar's army when he was marching through Gaul or to find Alexander's trash dumps when he was marching around conquering the world. Find it, excavate it, say, oh well of course, now we believe Alexander was really here because we found his trash dump. We believe Julius

Caesar and his Gallic wars, all of his travels are accurate because we found his trash dump.

They don't put anything else to that test. They're frantic to find some way to disprove. So we're going to find a 3,500-year-old garbage dump of entirely organic material.

They're not throwing away razor blades and old toasters and imperishable items. Anything made of bronze and of metal they're going to keep. They can melt down and reuse it if it breaks.

What are they going to throw away in their trash dumps? It's organic. It will break down. It will return to the soil you wouldn't expect to find.

I mean, they throw away old garments. They throw away anything made of fiber, anything made of old food hides and so on. What is it you expect to find after 35 centuries in the ground? Why do you think there's no manuscripts? Why do you think they don't just find people's letters and other than ink on ostraca, why do they not find anything? People lived with perishable stuff.

The Bedouin have been moving around the deserts in the Middle East and near East for millennia. Where are their trash dumps? You don't find it. They take what's worth keeping and what isn't is organic and breaks down in the heat and the sun.

Unless there's a caravan that gets covered by a sand dune and you find it. A hundred years later you hear all these desiccated leathery camels and people still upright in the sand. Not much gets preserved.

So I say that to remind you that when they take the ashes outside the camp, those ashes are still considered holy and they are taken to a clean place, a fresh place, an unspoiled, unsullied, uncontaminated, undefiled place. Now, dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return, but that dust is still holy to the Lord. If you belong to the Lord Jesus, the body that we have will be raised incorruptible.

And all of these speculations about, well, but what if I turn to dust and somebody plants corn over grandpa's grave and we eat the corn now, we've got his molecules. Nonsense. The principle is the dust is holy just as the ashes are holy and God knows them that are his and he will raise us just as he raised the Lord Jesus.

The same body that went into the grave came out of the grave. It wasn't a different body. It wasn't discarded.

They didn't find the dead body of Jesus. Well, he doesn't need that one anymore because now he's got a resurrection body. You can't find the earthly body of the Lord because it was transformed.

It was raised and it is the significance of that, not the details of the chemistry. If I'm currently

using some carbon dioxide molecules that were inside grandpa, I mean, look, we're not made out of the same stuff we were 15, 20 years ago. All of our stuff has been exchanged.

So which ones of the molecules that have been a part of me is God going to raise? Is he going to take a snapshot in time and paint with a marker the specific molecules that I'm made of at the point that I die and say, those same molecules, nobody else can use them. I'm going to raise those. It is to miss the point.

We're so literal. That's strapping a phylactery on your head so that you have the Word of God as frontlets between your eyes. It misses the whole point.

We have utter confidence that God is going to raise us, our very selves. We will be us and not another. When you meet your loved ones in glory, it's not going to be a facsimile.

It's not going to be a clone. It's not going to be a copy. It's not going to be a representation.

It is really them. You will really be you. I will really be I. The Lord Jesus is really the Lord Jesus.

It is us and not another transformed. We bring with us our personality, our character, our experience, our memory. And all of the memory that we have lost is restored.

There will probably be a period of time before there are no more tears. I think we'll probably, you know, Lord, could you have left that part out? I really wish I didn't remember. But we are the composite of not only what we're made of, but what we have experienced.

Science is just now catching up to what the Bible has already known, what God has known from the very beginning, that is it heredity or is it environment? Yes. Many times latent genetic possibilities and options are not expressed until something in our experience turns them on. And you can expose yourself to things that will turn on, you know, for example, is some of the things that we look at biblically as perverse.

And people say, well, that's hereditary. That perversion is just hereditary. And look, you know, some of these things, addictions and so on, it runs in my family.

Well, guess what? Many times and science is discovering that susceptibilities such as this don't get turned on until they are triggered. You've heard about the bird that doesn't sing a song until he hears another bird sing the song, but he doesn't learn the song from the bird. The song is imprinted in his DNA, but the switch isn't flipped until he hears another bird of his species sing that song.

The experience flips a genetic switch. This is why it is important to choose carefully what you expose yourself to, because if you have a genetic predisposition toward addiction, you may do fine as long as you don't expose yourself, as long as you don't make choices that take you down a road that flip your genetic switches. And now you're going to have a much harder time than people without that disposition, but it's because of choices you have made.

You may have a ministry gift. You may have something that benefits the body of Christ, but unless you make the decisions to fellowship and to assemble and to sing and to learn and to grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior, you may never find what that is that God built into you. It's in your DNA.

But you never put yourself in the position where those positive switches were flipped. I was remembering for some reason the movie *The Boys from Brazil* with Gregory Peck that was made back, and they thought, you know, the neo-Nazi guys thought, well, you know, Hitler will rise again. We got his DNA and we've implanted, we've got, I forget how many different little clones, little boy Hitlers growing up, little Adolfs that they had in different places, and they were going to raise Hitlers.

And so, you know, Gregory Peck is one of the main guys. He's got a really bad haircut, as I recall. But he's going to go, you know, get these guys and start schooling them so that they can, you know, any one of them can be the next Führer.

They're going to have a whole world full of Führers. They're going to dominate, you know, the Fourth Reich or whatever it is. Well, what they discovered is these little guys got no more desire for world dominance and taking over anything.

They just want to play. You know, the ones in America want to play baseball. The ones overseas want to, you know, build model airplanes.

And they got no more ambitions because, you know, Mr. Hitler wasn't just a product of his genetics. He was a product of his experience and his environment and his ups and downs and, you know, being an Austrian corporal and being exposed to things he was exposed to, frustrations and being incensed at the treatment of his country after World War I and so on. And we are an expression of those things.

Well, this is pertinent because our decisions matter. The thoughts and intents of the heart matter. What we choose to express and what we choose to bring before God matters.

Romans 12, 1 and 2, present your bodies a living sacrifice, isn't talking about your body. It's talking about what your body houses, which is your heart, which is your soul. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, your lives, your essential self.

And that's what's going to be raised. He will give life to your mortal bodies, it says. What's he talking about? It's the same body that you present to God.

But this is what the whole burnt offering signified. And so the things we learn about it, that there is the necessary presence of a priest. That in many cases this is offered by proxy.

You offer it on behalf of someone else. What an opportunity for parents to be the spiritual proxy for their children as Job was, as Abraham was, as Jacob was, as so many of your Old Testament saints were. What do you think Daniel's parents did in Jerusalem? What do you think

Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah's parents did after those boys were captured, castrated, and taken off to be trained as servants and princes in the palaces of Babylon? Do you think they prayed? Do you think they prayed and brought the problems of their sons before the Lord God? Of course they did if they weren't slain in the process.

So we have these two sets of instructions. There is the offerer's presentation in chapter 1. There is the priest's side. And why does he change his trousers? Think about this.

I had to puzzle on this for a while. Why does God say separate clothing? Of course your naysayers, this is all just made up stuff they just did it for the sake of doing it and it's just mumbo-jumbo. It's like the masons with their little footprints and their holy phrases and their little muckety-muck rituals.

This has significance, every single detail. The priest has special clothes for removing the ashes. So think about this.

Let's parse it. Let's decode it. What are the ashes? How did the ashes get there? You don't have ashes if you have not first had the sacrifice.

So if there are ashes and you look and you say, oh ashes. What if you're walking through the woods? Many of you guys have been out in the weeds in the woods and you come into a little clearing and you see a little ring of rocks and there's a pile of ashes in the middle. There's two things you know.

One, it wasn't a Boy Scout or all of that stuff would be gone. Leave it as you found it. Right? But secondly, what does it tell you? What happened here? There has been a fire.

Why do people light a fire? Basically two reasons. Either to keep warm or to cook food or both. So you can make assumptions.

You know something of what has gone on in a place when you find ashes. They look down in destruction layers of ancient cities and when they find ashes, what do they know? This city was attacked and burned. For some reason there was a big fire here.

Ashes. So ashes tell you something that has happened in the past. So what would the ashes inside the altar represent? Aside from the practical need that just like your fireplace, sooner or later you've got to get the ashes out of there or you can't use it anymore.

But you have special clothing for taking those ashes and taking them from the altar, the place where that sacrifice was, and setting them outside the altar, just outside. What else goes outside the altar? Where does the blood of the sacrifice go? Sprinkled. Sometimes it's poured out at the base of the altar.

Why would you do that? Why wouldn't you leave the life of the flesh and the blood and send it all up? Why wouldn't you get it in a bucket and put it into a special trough that sluices it out into

the Valley of Hinnom or something in Jerusalem? Why is it poured out at the base? Why is it sprinkled in some cases? There's disposition of the blood. This is the result of the death of the animal, right? The ashes are the result of the death of the animal, the acceptable presentation. But this is the earthly remainder of what was sent to God.

This idea that you have sent the offering as a representation. The priest is representative. The husband or father, in the case of a woman or a child, is representative.

In many cases the priest offering the morning and evening sacrifices, the weekly and the monthly sacrifices, the Sabbath sacrifices, new moon sacrifices, all of that, they're representing the nation, aren't they? It's representative and you send this representation up to God in the fire, in the smoke. This is what's left. This is what's still on the earth.

And it is holy. It is remembered. It is treated with respect.

It is treated as a holy thing. You have to have a special set of clothes just to touch these ashes. And once you have approached the altar, how do you think you get these ashes out? How big is the altar? How wide? Seven and a half feet.

How deep? Seven and a half feet. How high? How high now? Four and a half feet. How high is your average Levite? How big is this pit? How is he going to get the ashes out? What will he have to do to get the ashes out? He's got shovels and pans and all the rest of it.

How is he going to get them out? Is he going to come in contact with the altar? Has to. How can you not lean over the altar to scoop these ashes out and get them into the special receptacles made of bronze and carefully deposit them outside the altar? These are his altar contact clothes. And those are special clothes.

And those don't leave the area. Those clothes have been as close as you can get to the altar. And as close as you can get to those ashes.

And those ashes are not in a receptacle when they're inside the altar. They're going to be removed outside. Then they will be carried in a different receptacle outside the camp to a clean place.

But it is a reminder to the priest and to everybody else that this sacrifice, its earthly remainder is significant and is treated with great respect. There is a remembrance. And this isn't an occasion, it's not a fire and forget kind of a thing.

You've done this sacrifice, but that sacrifice has an earthly effect, an earthly deposit as well as a heavenly presence. And it is the priest, not the offerer, who reaches in and takes those ashes and deposits them outside. He will go change those clothes.

Those are his altar ash removal clothes. And that's the only thing they're used for. Linen trousers, why does it specify the linen trousers? That's the part of him that is most likely to

come in contact.

He's going to have to lean a knee as he leans in so he doesn't fall into the altar getting the ashes out. You have to wonder if in the course of all of these sacrifices and all of these days and all of these priests, if anybody ever fell in, it would be horrible because is it dark? Is it cold? What does it emphasize in Leviticus chapter 6 about the altar? The fire never goes out. So what kind of ashes are these? Hot ashes.

Hot ashes. You want to talk about a whole burnt offering. Some poor guy trying to clean those ashes falling in.

He's probably going to become a whole burnt offering himself because it's hot, extremely hot. This fire never goes out and there are sacrifices. The sacrifice burns all night.

Remember they put the bullock on and it says it will burn all night long. You do not remove the ashes until the next day. This is a hot fire.

There's going to be coals in those ashes. Reminders. What does the fire always represent? Judgment of God.

Those ashes are a reminder that the judgment of God has been expressed here. Conveyance to God and the fire of His holy presence with the seraphim and the fire surrounding His throne, which was known in these days, is signified. And these clothes get hot with the radiated heat.

Have you ever burned brush? I've got the pictures of most of you all when we burned that big brush pile up at Grandpa's. You remember if you get anywhere near that fire, it's like your clothes come straight out of the dryer or out from under the iron. Your jeans can burn you without even being singed.

Your clothing gets so hot. Well, this is the clothing that has experienced the heat of that fire. Take those clothes off before you walk outside the camp.

These are clothes that are used in the presence of that holiness and in the presence of that particular aspect of worship. So it's all significant. It all means something.

Well, we've seen this. Let me conclude with just a couple of quick notes. Because this was a historic sacrifice, the whole burnt offering in particular was historic, what would a faithful Israelite, an obedient Israelite, be thinking about as he brings this offering? It's historic precedent.

What did it mean when Abel brought it? He was grateful for God's blessing on his flocks and he was interested in coming before God and offering to God a sample and a thanksgiving and a recognition of his desire to be pleasing in God's sight as he did his daily care of his flocks and his herds. He's bringing his daily life before God and thanking God and expressing to God his desire that it all be a reflection of God's glory and dedicated to God's grace, right? Noah coming

out of the ark. The earth has just been purged.

A huge water judgment has cleansed the earth. And you sort of have a reverse here. You have the water cleansing and then you have the altar and fire.

What is Noah's expression in the offering he offers before God of the clean animals? What do you think he is expressing? Is he thankful to have been preserved through and beyond God's judgment? Is he dedicating, this is the first thing he does when he comes out of the ark, is he dedicating the remainder of his life before God and saying, you have preserved me and given me life, me and my sons and my wife and their wives? Noah offers on behalf of all of them. It doesn't say Shem, Ham and Japheth offered any offerings. Noah doesn't.

He's representative. It is gratitude. It is dedication.

You see these ideas coming out. What do you think Abraham's heart was as he took that ram and disentangled it from the thicket and offered it to God as a whole burnt offering? Was he grateful for God's provision? Was he dedicating this son who, as it were, had died and was raised from the dead on that mountain to God? Thanksgiving and dedication, recognition and commitment before God. What do you think Romans 12, 1 and 2 asks us to do when we present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as our reasonable service? What does the second verse say? Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed.

What about our bodies when we die? Are we conformed to the world? Maybe temporarily, but we will be transformed. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. We shall all be transformed.

In a moment in the twinkling of an eye, the last trump, the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first out of the dust, out of the ashes, out of the sea, wherever it is they perished, we who are alive and remain caught up together, transformed. So what is our reasonable service? Is it thanksgiving and everything give thanks? This is the will of God. It doesn't say for all of God's blessings give thanks, does it? And everything give thanks.

This is the will of God concerning you. How about dedication and commitment? Obviously, put your all on the altar. Can we present before God? Can we put on the altar and send up into God's presence our efforts with our flocks and our herds? The things that we do, the way we invest our time, can we put that on the altar and send it before God as an expression of our dedication and our commitment, our thanksgiving? If not, we need to question whether that's something we need to keep as a part of our lives.

If it won't survive the fire and smoke test, if the ashes of it are not presentable enough that the priest has got to change his clothes, then we need to rethink it, don't we? Why are we here? Who do we represent? Are we qualified to be that offering and to bring that offering before God or not? It's a close question. It's a hard answer sometimes, but that's the test. How many

people do you think are even considering that test in this day? I'm often overwhelmed at the number of people and the number of thoughts and intents God's trying to keep track of, but it dawns on me, in reality, God only has to watch over a very few because there's so few of us that are seriously pursuing the plan and purpose of God.

A lot of people giving lip service. A lot of people are going to come up and say, Lord, Lord, in your name. I was looking at that verse this past week.

I'm going to take one more minute. You remember the three things that they say? Lord, Lord, in your name, did we not, and they list three things. Did we not cast out demons? Did we not work miracles? And each time it says, in your name, in your name, in your name.

Did we not do good things, miracles? Did we not get rid of bad things, cast out demons? And the third one slips my mind. You can look it up. But interestingly, they felt like, hey, we've gotten rid of bad things and we've performed miraculously good things in your name.

What's the problem? And Jesus is going to look at them and say, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Their evaluation, we've done miracles.

We've pushed out evil. Jesus' evaluation, you are a worker of iniquity. I don't know you.

Get away from me. And this is in the resurrection. This isn't at the great white throne.

These are believers. It's a sobering question. Are we telling ourselves we're good, but we don't pass this Holborn offering test? It's not an unblemished offering.

It doesn't follow God's rigid particular instructions. It's not that hard, but it is very particular. There's one right way to offer this offering.

There's one right way for the priest to process it. There's one right way for the offerer to bring it. That's the question we have to ask ourselves.

And we've got to ask it ourselves before God starts asking it on our behalf and sending us somewhat unhappy reminders that we haven't been paying attention to our responsibilities. So let's look at it as an affirmative and as an opportunity, not as a place to stumble. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the powerful way it illustrates for us both our opportunities and our responsibilities before You as we live this life in Christ who is our great high priest who has qualified us to enter into Your very presence. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things in our hearts and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.