

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-10-04a

This is Sunday, the 4th of October 2015, and we continue our study of Christ and the sacrifices. We find ourselves at the present time in the book of Leviticus, looking at the formal instructions that God gave to Israel through Moses, and having covered the first chapter, which deals specifically with the whole burnt offering, and particularly with the individual bringing of that offering. There is a national version of this that the priests perform twice a day, morning and evening, and on many other occasions, new moons and so forth.

But chapter one really deals with the first and foremost expression to individuals, if anyone, any man wishes to bring this offering, here's how to do it. So it is emphasis on an individual bringing this offering of his own free will, when he deems it appropriate. So we've studied that one, and we're going to move this morning into chapter two, and the grain offering, the meal offering, what the King James calls the meat offering.

All of this, of course, doesn't mean a lot, unless it comes down to something helpful for us. So we'll review what we found helpful in chapter one, and then move into chapter two, but let's take a moment at this point to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we're grateful for your many provisions, the blessings, the watch care that you exert over us, the security and the freedom that we enjoy in Christ, the presence and power of your Holy Spirit, bringing to our hearts and minds the truth that pertains and that bears on our joys and our sorrows, our challenges and our blessings.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus, who came and lived life in flesh much as ours, who encountered the pressures and the tests that we face, who was in all points challenged as we are, but showed us how these things can be navigated, negotiated, and successfully gone through without sin in a way that is pleasing to you. We thank you for His ongoing ministry of intercession at your right hand and His representation of us as acceptable in your sight. We look forward to the day when He returns to bring us to Himself and present us to you.

We know that this time that remains to us is a time of salvation. It is a time to enter into our deliverance, and we pray that as we look at these things from your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will minister them to each heart, that they will be meaningful, they'll be helpful, they will make a difference as we anticipate the future kingdom, both here on this earth and in those realms where we will dwell with you for all eternity. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, we have seen now the importance of the book of Leviticus given to the nation of Israel before they really got to the place where they could fully exploit a fixed place of worship, an agricultural economy. And this is going to be particularly significant when we look at this second chapter.

Why? I mean, just in concept, before we even read the chapter, if it's a grain offering, and you're a nomadic Bedouin-like camp that moves from place to place, what's the problem with

the grain offering? Where do you get the grain? Are you going to plant a little patch of barley or a little patch of wheat? How do you know you're going to be there long enough to cultivate it and harvest it and bring it in? You're a nomadic, you're moving, you're following the water, you're following the grass for your flocks and things. Do they have any grain with them? Do you think they brought any from Egypt? Couldn't they just eat that? Couldn't they just offer that? What's the point of the grain that they brought out of Egypt? What do you think they'll use it for? Remember now, they don't expect they're going to be wandering for 40 years. When they leave Egypt and march out and go into the wilderness, they figure, well, you know, this is something measured in weeks.

This is not a terribly long journey. We're just going around the southeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea here, and, you know, dodge the desert, move up the, there's a route right up along the coast. We can be there, you know, in a couple of months at most.

So if they've got grain with them, what do you think they're planning to do with it? What's it for? Planting, right? Going to go into the land. If you want to become agricultural, you need some seed grain. So what's the problem if you eat up all your seed grain? Remember the old Aesop fable about the grasshopper and the ant? Grasshopper, is he a grasshopper or a cricket? I forget.

Some kind of long-legged deal, fiddling all summer long while the ants are busy storing stuff up. And then in my little child story book, you flip the page, and here's this grasshopper with icicles hanging off his nose and snow on his shoulders, and his little fiddle is tucked up under his arm, and he's knocking on the door of the ant farm there. You know, have you got anything you can share with me? Why? Because he fiddled away the time of opportunity and wasn't ready when there was a need.

Well, when they get to the land and they need to plant, if they ate up all the seed grain, then what are they going to plant? It's going to be very difficult. You have to hope that they're going to maybe capture some from the people they displace. But I say this to remind you that grain is somewhat a rare and precious commodity.

How do I know this? Think for a moment. If grain is abundant, look at it this way. If they've got just grain readily available all over the place, they can just grab some and make a little oatmeal in the morning and have some barley bread for lunch and have a nice fine flour matzo bread meal in the evenings.

What would not be happening that happened for 40 years necessarily? What did they gather on the ground every morning and had to get a double portion of on Friday? If grain is plentiful, what's the manna for? Who needs manna if you've got grain all over the place? They don't have grain. It is rare, it is precious, it is being conserved and saved, and maybe they can buy some from a passing caravan or whatever. But if grain was plentiful, who needs manna? You know, a lot of them didn't even like the manna.

They complained that it was sort of tasteless and bland and were sick of this stuff. Well, look, if they've got three different kinds of grain on their pantry shelf, who's going to go get manna? Why are they going to be complaining about no food? When they say no food, you've brought us out here to starve. What are they trying not to do? They're trying not to eat that treasure, that seed grain that they're wanting to take into the land.

That's their retirement account, so to speak. That's their bank account. So grain is a precious thing.

And this is an interesting factor to keep in mind as we look at chapter 2, which is the grain offering, to make an offering. And remember, these instructions are given at Sinai. God knows they're going to be wandering for 40 years.

God knows they'll be going into the land. And eventually they will have a situation where grain is plentiful enough. Once the children of Israel cross the Jordan into the land, the manna ceases, right? No more manna.

Well, it's helpful to kind of keep the reality of the historical context of this story in mind, because this is, after all, a narrative. Even these regulations in Leviticus are part of a story. And you find this out even looking at the name of the book.

The people in Israel, and later the Jews, the Judaism, names these books typically by the first couple of words. And so the name of Genesis is Barashit, in the beginning. You know what the name of this book is? And God called.

God spoke. Because that's the first word. The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him.

But the very first word in the book is the same as it is in English. What's the very first word here in Leviticus 1.1? It says, Now, which is a translation of the Hebrew conjunction w' or vav. Wow.

It's the single little shepherd's crook. Vertical line with a little knob at the top, a little crook at the top. And that's And.

It's a continuation. This follows right after the last verse of Exodus. The cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day.

Fire was over it by night in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. And the Lord called to Moses. It's just a continuation.

It's a part of the narrative. But we now get into these instructions for how to bring offerings. We've already covered Chapter 1 in some detail.

What is the significance of it? If we think back and we say, Well, it's a whole burnt offering. Do you remember what the idea of it was? First of all, just by way of review, this is the oldest offering. This is the primordial offering, the archetypal offering.

This is the offering of Cain and Abel. This is the offering of Noah. This is the offering of Abraham.

This is the offering of the patriarchs. The offering they brought was the whole burnt offering. And given that background, it has a heritage of being a personal offering.

One that is offered on the occasion that the offerer feels motivated. God doesn't come down and say, Hey, where's my offering? It's Tuesday. Or, Hey, where's my offering? It's a new moon.

Throughout Genesis, this offering is brought by an individual who wants to express something to God. So it has a long history. It has an individual emphasis.

And when we get to Leviticus, we find that this is one of the most commonly offered offerings. It, as I said before, is offered every morning and every evening by the priests. It is offered every Sabbath day.

There's a special Sabbath day burnt offering. It's offered every new moon. It's offered at Passover.

It's offered at the Feast of Weeks. It's offered at the Feast of Trumpets. It's offered anytime there's a new moon.

It's also commonly offered along with the other sacrifices that we're about to study. So when you get to the guilt offering in Leviticus chapter 5, there will be this whole burnt offering offered along with it. The sin offering, you'll find it.

In the free will offering, you'll find it. In the sheaf offering, the new grain offering, this is another expression that goes along with those in many cases. When there is a need for ceremonial cleansing, you've become ritually defiled, ritually impure for whatever reason.

The burnt offering is one of the sacrifices that is offered as a part of that cleansing ritual. All of these, of course, are pictures. They are physical expressions of spiritual truth.

So if a woman becomes unclean because she's born a child, Mary and Joseph go to the temple and offer an offering after the birth of the Lord Jesus. You think, well, how could you be defiled after giving birth to the Lord Jesus? Well, it's a picture. And she brings that offering.

She doesn't say, hey, don't have to bring the two turtle doves because I just gave birth to the Lord. I can't defile me. We follow the instructions that the Lord gives us just as she did.

Cleansing of a leper, Leviticus 14, I've alluded to that many times. Anybody that has a discharge, bodily fluids and leaks of various kinds in our plumbing. Unintentional contact with a dead body.

All of these as a part of the ritual for cleansing. And it isn't just a bunch of made up regulations to keep the priests busy. These communicated truth.

I'm going to express to you an opinion that I have that relates to this. We think that we are really, really smart in these days because we have a lot of knowledge about how the world works. Physics and biology and chemistry and so on have given us a lot of modern conveniences.

But in the ancient day, generations ago, centuries ago, because of the lack of all of these crutches and props and helps, you think about what it takes to cook. Some of you are involved in cooking. Most of us, when we're single, have to figure out how to cook some kind of way to keep from starving when we get out on our own.

But you think about the days when it was a standard part of the skill set of a young woman to be able to turn raw ingredients into all kinds of food. And there was knowledge of just about how much yeast is going to go with how much flour, which is going to go with how much baking powder, which is going to go with how much butter and how much milk and how much all of the other ingredients to make biscuits or to make cakes or breads of various kinds. Do you want it to rise? Do you want it to stay flat? Do you want flapjacks? Do you want cornbread? And because of working with these things at first hand, people intuitively understood relationships between ingredients.

Men who worked with their hands, children who grew up playing with their hands, playing with material objects, blocks and sticks and boards and the things that you find around. They didn't have plastic toys and you played with what you had at hand. And we learned by interacting with our physical environment principles of physics that just became intuition, became an understanding.

Well, as you project further back into the past and you think about some of the greatest philosophers and thinkers that have ever put pen to paper in the human race, most of them were a long time ago because we are not, in my opinion, evolving into a higher state of wisdom. We are devolving. And people could listen to an oration that would last hours and recount it, go back home.

They were the one that was free to go attend and they would go back home. Somebody that listened to Jesus deliver the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the Plain. Someone who heard Socrates or Aristotle hold forth had a retentive mind and the ability to organize their memory and retain the information and understand the concepts and could go back and reproduce it like we now use tape recorders and digital.

We don't even use tape recorders. It tells you how old I am. Recorders of various kinds.

I said something the other day that really made me feel, oh, somebody needed some help on their computer. And I said, well, I can dial in and look at your screen. And then I thought, dial in? What is that? Like 30 years ago, dial, and nobody dials a phone.

Nobody does that. Dial in. You know, the last time anybody dialed in was when modems ran at

300 baud, which people don't even use modems anymore.

So at any rate, in the ancient day, people's minds were powerful. And this pertains to our study because we think, well, why do we have to do all of this decoding and just hack our way through the jungle of Leviticus and try to figure out what all this means? For people in the ancient day, this required very little effort. When God required a sacrifice after you came in contact with leprosy or a dead body, people intuited the understanding.

They got the point. Oh, I see, this is a living death. And what God is saying is that we are under sentence of death.

We embody death. We come in contact with death. We have to go to God to solve that problem and be given life and be given restoration and be able to participate in fellowship and blessing.

They got this as children. We have to work to recover this understanding because we are weak. If you roll your child around in a stroller all through their toddling years, how are they going to walk? If you hand them the answer to every problem, if you supervise their every movement and every activity and hand them every answer, give them every solution, how do they ever become strong? They've got to walk on their own two feet.

They have to solve problems. They've got to bump their own head. They've got to burn their own fingers because there's no knowledge like experiential knowledge.

And you do not want a dependent person who can't think and can't do and can't be without running to mommy and daddy or running to some mentor of some kind. This is true in the spiritual realm as well. So that's why Leviticus is a bit of a chew.

It's steak that we have to grind on a little to get the understanding. And the reason is we're not the people, you know, there's a lot of mockery of the old goat herds, you know, that lived in the ancient day. Those goat herds could think circles around the people who were calling them, you know, backward and ignorant, didn't have 1% of the knowledge we have today and so on.

Those people, your average shepherd could easily out-think, out-maneuver, out-perform, out-do, out-live, out-die any anemic, pallid Internet user today. Well, these sacrifices were meaningful and Israel got it. That's the reason God gave them without much explanation.

He didn't need to explain it. These were smart people. These were people with intellectual capacity and power, and they got it.

We struggle somewhat, and we are at a bit of a disadvantage. We're at a distance. It's a different culture, different time.

They dealt with animals on a daily basis. So watching the life of the flesh flow out of a wound in the neck wasn't as strange to them as it would be to us. Well, we're reviewing and summarizing what we know about this first chapter in the Holborn Offering.

It was the most ubiquitous offering. It was the most common offering. It was regularly offered both by individuals and by the priestly functionaries.

The regulations we saw were important and specific and particular. One way to get it done right, any other way is wrong. And if you do it improperly, it is not acceptable to God.

People say, well, He's so narrow. Truth is narrow. How would you like it if friction wasn't a constant? And some days you drive out on the highway and your tires grip just fine.

Other times you back out of your driveway and your car just keeps on sliding right through the neighbor's fence and right into their backyard pool because, well, friction's different today. The laws of physics are kind of variable. We went through a little bit of a bubble in space-time as we hurtled through the universe, and all of a sudden gravity doesn't work, and the family's all plastered to the ceiling.

I was outside, and I'm up in the stratosphere watching my blood boil. We appreciate the narrowness and the consistency that God has built into the universe. Well, guess what? God is consistent.

His truth is consistent. And it is narrow. It is precise.

It is particular. And we should be glad. We know that the things that are brought before God are to be of the highest quality, no blemish, no spot, whether it is a bird or one of the larger animals.

And the purpose of it was atonement, at-one-ment. People used to kind of smile when, you know, southern preachers would say, Atonement, it's at-one-ment, at-one-ment. But if you look up the etymology, that is literally where that word comes from.

It doesn't have Greek or Latin antecedents. Atonement was constructed as a word from the words at-one-ment, to make one, to unite. Atonement, that's what it means.

So, finally, in terms of application, we know that there is a distance between ourselves and God. And in order to approach, there must be something done to solve that distance. It's not just a geographical distance.

It isn't a dimensional distance. It is a spiritual distance. God is righteous.

We are not. We just aren't. We think we are.

We like to pat ourselves on the back and say, Well, I'm a pretty good person. I haven't robbed any liquor stores or run over any small children lately. I'm, you know, I look around, and there's a lot of people that are worse than me.

I'm not shackled up with anybody, and I don't use foul language, and I don't have any really bad habits. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the

wind, carry us away.

Why? Because we are of the flesh, and God isn't interested in our opinion of ourselves. God is only interested in His opinion, and He's God. He gets that right.

He's the Creator, and He made us, and He gets to judge our righteousness, not us. So, there is this idea of acceptance. God says, You can be acceptable.

It's easy. It's not difficult. It isn't out of reach.

It is available to everyone, but you have to do it My way. Because in coming to God, God's way, we are forced to be humble. We don't get to be proud of ourselves.

We don't get to decide that we're just a pretty good sort, and God ought to accept us because look how nice we are. God's way forces us to recognize, as the offerer in that whole burnt offering placed his hand on the hand of the animal, and said, This animal is about to lose its life because of me. It's just my touch.

It's just contact with me, transferring my fallibility, my corruptibility, my insufficiency, if nothing else, my mortality. If I'm such a good person, why can't I give myself the ability to live forever? Because we're mortal. We're limited.

We are short-sighted. What we think is good is actually ill. Many medical advances.

Doctors, in all good faith, used to bleed their patients because they were convinced that there were bad humors in there that were making people sick. And if I just open you up and bleed you into a bowl, well, the bad stuff will come out. They believed that.

It was all in good faith. It was the latest medical technology of the day. And history is replete with examples of people who thought they were doing a good thing.

Look at all of the lawsuit commercials on television. Did you take this and so? Did you experience blindness, bleeding from the ears, death, and so on? If you died from taking this, contact us right away because there's a lawsuit underway and you can be paid. And you know, Cymbalta and a lot of things where they thought this is going to be a great thing, this is going to be a great drug to help people.

Well, it had unanticipated side effects, and now there's a class action lawsuit, and you can get paid for going blind or whatever it is it did to you. Or your loved one was killed. Good intentions, but we are short-sighted.

We're fallible. We're limited. We construct the little bit of data we can assimilate from our eyes and our ears and our hands.

And God is master of all. And he knows what is best, and he knows what is right, and he knows what is true. And until we acknowledge that, we cannot approach.

That's what the Holburne offering does. That's what the Romans 12, 1 and 2 offering that you and I are enjoined to bring does. Present yourselves, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Why? It's your reasonable service. It is rational. It is sound thinking to recognize how limited and fallen and short-sighted and mundane and earthly and temporary we are.

God is the opposite of all those things. He is righteous. He is eternal.

He is all-wise. We sang this morning, immortal, invisible, God-only wise. He's hidden from our eyes in light inaccessible, but he has made himself accessible through Christ.

That's what this offering anticipates. That's what it expresses. The old people of faith, and that's the qualification.

Many Israelites probably didn't give a thought, just like many Christians don't give a thought. But those of faith understood what this offering represented. God resists the proud.

But he gives grace to the humble. And this offering, first and foremost, is an expression of humility. Whatever I am, whatever I have, O Lord, I bring to Thee according to Your instructions.

Recognizing my fallibility, recognizing my corruption and sinfulness, recognizing the temporary nature of my life, I bring myself to You in accordance with Your instructions, trusting Your promise of eternal life, trusting Your promise of provision and blessing and goodness. God will work all things together for good. Is there a period there? What does Romans 8.28 say? All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His promise.

If you're going to approach Him and claim His promise, you've got to heed the call. What does the call say? It says, come this way. Bring the sacrifice this way.

Recognize the principles of righteousness and sin and judgment this way. One way. God's way.

Anybody that wants to dictate to God, anybody that thinks they've got a better idea, is going to suffer great loss at the judgment. Saved yet so as by fire. Patting the flames out on what's left of their tiny loin cloth of righteousness.

And existing far from God in the eternal future because they're far from God now. Why would God draw you near when you have pushed Him away throughout this life? Doesn't make any sense. That's what this offering represents.

Well, there is an entirely different turn now as we move to Leviticus chapter 2. Let's take a quick look. We'll go to the break and come back and look at this in detail. When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour.

He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it. Already we have about five things that we've got to examine. And we're only one verse into the chapter.

It is a grain offering. So it is vegetable, not animal. It is a fine flour.

There are many different kinds of flour. This is one particular kind of flour. He is going to pour oil on it and frankincense.

Oil and frankincense. Completely different than anything we looked at in chapter 1. This, I would say, and others have said, is one of the most difficult of the offerings in Leviticus to understand. You can kind of get animal sacrifice.

We have examples replete that we've looked at. But when you look at the grain offering, what is going on? What are we supposed to deduce and understand? What is the application? Why do I care that God put this stuff about grain and offering it in Leviticus chapter 2? Well, one thing we know is that the order of these is significant. And what did he start with? The humility and the personal dedication and understanding of chapter 1. This offering follows both sequentially and logically the whole burnt offering.

You're not going to be thinking about or performing this offering until you have first done the other. So this is a person who is already in the courts of God. Who has been cleansed.

Who has been sanctified. Who has reflected their sense of dedication and personal commitment to God by bringing the whole burnt offering. And understanding the nature of atonement by the shedding of blood.

Life for a life. The reason I have life is that God has taken a life somewhere else. It is at a cost.

Sin has a cost. Evil has a cost. We often don't think about this.

We think, well, I may have had a mental sin here. I may have gone off on some fantasy trip. And nobody's harmed.

It's a victimless crime. It was just in my mind. You know, the people talking about adultery.

And Jesus said, if you have lusted after a woman in your heart, it is as serious as if you had actually fulfilled it and done the deed. And people say, well, but it's victimless. She doesn't even know.

It was just a little operation in my mind. There's a great passage of scripture that says, can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned? Sin brings with it inevitable judgment from God because it is a corrupting, cancerous malignancy. And God's judgment follows it.

And that's the fire. And if you're going to bring into your bosom the fuel for God's fire, you are going to be burned. And it doesn't matter.

That's a human standard. Well, was anybody hurt? It's okay as long as no one is hurt. You can engage in any form of activity as long as nobody gets hurt.

That's the human standard. God's standard is, if it partakes of malignant, cancerous, evil, and sin, you think nobody's hurt. But God, from a wider view, knows that someone is getting hurt.

You think that bleeding the patient is a good thing. God knows better. You think leaving the gangrenous limb on as long as possible is a good thing, as they used to.

God knows better. So this is submission to the wisdom of God. It is recognition in humility of the grace of God in His way of solving this problem.

It begins with the understanding reflected in the whole burnt offering. With that understanding and on that foundation, we now move into chapter 2. So that's a good clue as to what's going to happen. Because this offering is going to reflect things that only a person who gets the whole burnt offering is going to understand.

Only someone who appreciates the magnitude of God's grace and the necessity of death to solve the sin problem is going to get it. So that's what we'll pick up when we come back from our break.