

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-10-18a

This is Sunday, the 18th of October, 2015. We are studying the Levitical offerings now as we look at Christ in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. We have already seen in some detail the first chapter of Leviticus, the whole burnt offering, the concept of complete dedication and commitment that it reflects, which of course was most fully fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Himself.

He is our example and Romans 12, 1 and 2 is our New Testament equivalent of that. We are now in chapter 2 looking at the grain offering or the meal offering and we'll continue that study momentarily, but let's pause and go before the Lord in prayer so that we can individually prepare our hearts for the ministry of God's Holy Spirit and hopefully the things that we look at from God's Word will be spiritual food that will nourish and strengthen us for our assigned tasks. Shall we pray? Father, it is always humbling to remember the dust and the clay from which we are made and to see the great gulf that Your Son, the Lord Jesus, spanned on our behalf when He came to earth and partook of our flesh, became one of us and in so doing became our Redeemer, our Atonement, our Righteousness, our Peace and our Sanctification.

And through Him we have been lifted up and have been given eternal life. We know that the time that remains to us in this life is preparation, is training and an opportunity for growth and for understanding and appreciation so that we will be prepared for service and for function and for life with You and with Him in the kingdoms that are to come. This time that we spend together in fellowship looking at the truth of Your Word and being taught by Your Spirit is precious to us.

We thank You for it and we thank You for this portion of Your Word. We ask that You will bless it to each heart, that all of us will find meaningful and helpful insight and motivation from these truths that although they were communicated long ago are just as timely and just as practical for us now as they have ever been from the time when the first sacrifices were offered. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ and we pray that our time together will glorify Him and increase our appreciation for Him.

We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. Leviticus chapter 2, when anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be a fine flour, he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it. There are three primary components here.

The fine flour, which is of course representative of something that is of human manufacture, human cultivation, human manufacture in sort of a unique way. There is quite a bit of labor involved in producing fine flour and it is symbolic of our work, where in the first chapter it is much more symbolic of ourselves. So we move in order from first dedicating ourselves to dedicating the work of our hands.

What's interesting about this is that this is not a work that is done for God. Make sense? Sowing grain, cultivating it, reaping it, threshing it, all of the processing to come to the point of having

fine flour, this is not something uniquely for God. There wasn't a special corner of the field, there wasn't a special crop that was uniquely grown and offered to God.

This is the normal agricultural crop. So what does this tell us? I think sometimes people, especially in our modern Christian culture, think that working for God is something I do at the church or it's something I support via giving to missions or there is some uniquely sort of glow in the dark work that is for God and honors God and that's the part that I sort of dedicate and bring to Him. What we realize in looking at the grain offering is this is the everyday.

This is a commonplace, but it is done extra well, it is ground extra fine, it is seasoned if you will with frankincense which is over and above and this oil that is placed on it. All of this is from the common world but it is pressed to its maximum and offered to God. I would suggest that the application of that for us is that rather than thinking of two different kinds of work that we do, well I have my job and then I have what I do for the church or I have my job and then I have what I support by way of charity or I have the things I do around the house and for my family and then I have this other.

I say this more academically for us because we are not a brick and mortar church where this can be much more of a forgotten truth. Many times and most of us have been a part of a larger church that has an edifice and a structure and a lot of things to be done and it takes some thought to remember that it isn't just the work that is done down there, teaching a Sunday school class or ministering in whatever ways at the church. I used to live at a corner from the church in a parsonage when we were up in Tahlequah and it was a real interesting concept to be in the house and doing my work there because I was even bi-vocational there and then look across the street and see the church and by walking across the street there is work that is done over there and is done in advance preparation wise to be performed there and then there are other things.

It occurred to me at that time as this passage suggests to us that really whatever we do we should do heartily as unto the Lord. It should all be for us fine flour, the common places, the standard things that we do, just chores and routine things can be done heartily as unto the Lord and not just so that we don't get in trouble, not just so that they are done because they need to be done and bad things will happen if they are not done. We can basically add the frankincense to them.

It's still flour, it's still oil, these are common places, these are staples of life in Israel. What's not a staple is adding the frankincense. This portion has been done especially well and fine and it's going before the Lord and I add these granules which impart a sweet smelling aroma before the Lord and this is our privilege to leverage our time to convert it from the mundane to the eternal.

God has given us eternal life and we enjoy it day by day but we are still here in this life and so there is a duality, there is a blending and a mix. So that's what this second chapter offering, this grain meal offering suggests to us is that the presence of God in our lives, our relationship with

God elevates the ordinary into the extraordinary. It takes flour and makes it fine.

It takes oil and makes it extra fine. It adds frankincense and our lives become something that we can present before God as a sweet smelling savor and it's everything. There aren't portions that we hold back, there aren't portions that don't count and this concept is reinforced as we have seen the details here and you get down to verse 12, As for the offering of the first fruits, you shall offer them to the Lord, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma.

Every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt. You shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

The reminder that this is a reflection and an expression of relationship. I do this the way I do it because I am related to God in a unique way. Israel was uniquely related to God as a nation.

We are uniquely related to God through Christ and much more so as you see the last days approaching. It is becoming more and more difficult to find any vestige of our Christian foundation left in our culture, in our entertainment, in the waves of communication that permeate everything and everybody anymore. The values, the topics of discussion, the attitudes are so foreign to what we embrace and cultivate as believers that it is much more a wrestling match in terms of the invisible warfare that we are engaged in.

Keeping this in mind, remembering that along with this offering of flour and oil and frankincense without honey, the work of the busyness of others, without leaven which is the adulteration, the corruption factor, and also with salt, it is an expression of and a reminder of God's relationship with us. So we are going to do things this afternoon. We will fold up our Bibles and go home and resume whatever it is we are doing for the weekend.

We will resume our activities tomorrow. Can we treat those as being brought before the Lord, worthy to be observed? It is an expression of our fellowship. And this is expressed as we close the chapter.

You put the oil on it, you lay the frankincense on it. In verse 15, it is a grain offering. Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion.

The beaten grain and the oil with all the frankincense goes up. But there is only a memorial portion that is burned. It is a representative portion.

And this is a fascinating thing to try to understand in Scripture. What exactly is representation? A representative thing. If you go back to the birth of the nation of Israel, when does that happen? When is the nation really born? We talk about being born by water and by blood.

And the blood of the Passover, the original Passover sacrifice in the tenth and final incursion of God into Egypt. We have three sets of three plagues and then the death of the firstborn. And the Passover and the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts and on the lintel.

Who is at risk on that first Passover night? When death passes through the land, is everyone inside the house without blood on the door in danger? It's only the firstborn. Only the firstborn. And this, I have been reminded recently, is one of the great points of criticism for people who are antagonistic toward God.

Well, God is a baby killer. He went in and just killed these little babies in their cradles on Passover night. He is a baby killing God.

I just want to have a really safe, distant place to stand on the judgment day when the people who imagine such things are held to account for these expressions of hubris. But if you remember, it is the firstborn and they are the firstborn within a household. And the way this works is, if a man has five sons, one of them is the firstborn.

They all grow up and have families of their own. The firstborn has a family and he has children. In that household, it is the firstborn son in the household which represents the future, the heir, the one who will carry on the family leadership, the family name, the family holdings, leadership in the clan and so on within the tribe.

So the firstborn son reflects the anticipation of ongoing existence and future blessing, continued existence and future blessing. Well, what is our salvation about? Continued existence and future blessing, right? So the concept of the firstborn is that, reflects that, embodies that. And that is what is at stake when relationship with God, which is freely offered through faith and obedience, is rejected.

There is a simple and easy path. It's not hard, it's not difficult, it's not strenuous, but it requires a submissive attitude. There was no difficulty obtaining a lamb.

It wasn't an expensive item, especially in Egypt. It wasn't hard, it wasn't expensive, it wasn't out of reach. Anybody who was so poor that they couldn't afford such things could go visit somebody they knew who did have one.

All you had to do was be behind the door that had the blood upon it. But it required belief that it was necessary, belief that God would keep His word, both in preservation and in judgment. And by acknowledging those things, acknowledging that God is who He is and does what He says He will do, people applied the blood, people followed the instructions to stay indoors.

And when death passed through, it was the firstborn who either lived or died, because the firstborn represent that future. God did this in a representative way. He could have said anybody that is not behind a blood-marked doorway will die, but everyone in Egypt would have died.

Right? All of the Egyptians. There would have been no one left. So God is practical.

At the same time that He communicates with us, He is practical. And He says, I will get this point across, but I will do it in a representative fashion. I always think of Leviticus 14 and the

cleansing of the leper.

When he is healed and he goes through the ritual process, there are two birds that are involved. One is slain and his blood is dripped into a bowl of fresh water. Then the other bird is dipped in that blood and is set free.

Well, this is representative of death and resurrection. The blood-marked bird is identified with the one that died. In practical terms, God can't raise a dead bird every time a leper is healed.

So it has to be a representative picture of death and resurrection. Same with the scapegoat, the ezazel idea. One goat is slain, the other is set free, identified and marked with the other.

It's representative. And that's the case with the firstborn. Well, the reason this idea of representation is important is because it's not just the firstborn at the Passover that are a representative picture.

The firstborn throughout Israel are representative. And you remember God says, Whatever opens the womb in Israel is mine. Remember that? It's the firstfruits.

That's why it mentions here the firstfruits in verse 12. The offering of the firstfruits you shall offer them to the Lord. In Israel, the firstborn of all families were gods.

The firstborn of animals were gods and were to be sacrificed. Well, that's okay for animals, but what about people? Keep your place here and turn to Exodus chapter 34. Exodus chapter 34.

This is found several places in Scripture. It's also in Exodus chapter 13. But we'll look at it in chapter 34 of Exodus.

Verse 19. All that open the womb are mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, whether ox or sheep. The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb.

And if you will not redeem him, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty-handed. What is going on? Redeem a donkey with a lamb or break its neck.

One or the other. All that open the womb, the firstborn in other words, are mine. Well, the short answer here is that in Israel, the Levites were the redemption for the firstborn.

They are the representative tribe. Normally, in the family of Jacob, everything would have been Reuben's. Reuben would have been the heir.

Reuben would have been the family priest, the paternal patriarchal priest. He would have gotten the double portion. But you remember that through his sin, he lost those things.

And so the privileges devolved down to various other brothers. And the rulership went to Judah. The priesthood went to Levi.

The double portion went all the way down to Joseph. But the firstborn possesses these things. And in Israel, the priesthood devolving to the tribe of Levi, the Levites now function as the surrogate or replacement firstborn for Israel.

So there is a price that is paid for redemption. Whatever opens the womb is holy to the Lord. It belongs to Him.

And you redeem it back. You trade money for your firstborn. And that's at the birth.

Then throughout its life, it is the function of the Levites that redeems the firstborn. As I said, that same concept is reflected in Exodus 13. So what's the bottom line here? The Levites are representative of everyone in Israel in the same way that the firstborn are representative in the family.

The redemption that takes place is to substitute, to vicariously fulfill a responsibility. And this is important because a lot of people say, well, I don't understand why God has to kill anybody for sin, and I really don't understand how Jesus, one man, can die and pay for everybody's sins. I just don't get that.

Well, it's not going to be gotten. It will not be understandable until we first understand God's foundation that is laid for substitutionary atonement and representation in the Old Testament. And this is part of that foundation that one can represent many.

The king can reflect and represent his whole kingdom. The firstborn can reflect and represent the family. And why not the father? Why doesn't Jacob represent his family instead of Judah as the firstborn, or Reuben as the firstborn? Why is it the firstborn son rather than the existing father? Because it is looking ahead.

It is looking to the future. Is the line going to end or is it going to continue? If you have the father be the representative, well, it doesn't matter if the father is judged or the father disappears. I've got a son who can pick up and carry on.

But if the son is representative, and if the son is taken away, the firstborn is taken away, that reflects the reality of loss of future life and loss of future blessing. You say, well, but what if he's got another son? Well, as soon as the firstborn is gone, now you've got a new firstborn, and he's under the very same obligation. And as long as there is a son there that is the oldest, he's now the firstborn.

It's just like right of succession for a monarchy. Well, the reason this is important is the eating of this sacrifice. This is what we're getting to.

All of this is background, because unlike the olah, the entire thing is sent to God, this has a memorial portion presented to God. What happens to the rest of it? Turn over to Leviticus chapter 6. Remember, we have two passages for each of these, and the law of the grain offering begins in verse 14. This is the law of the grain offering.

The sons of Aaron shall offer it on the altar before the Lord, take a handful of the fine flour with its oil, frankincense, burn it on the altar for sweet aroma as a memorial to the Lord. Recognizing and remembering that this is first and foremost presented to the Lord. The remainder, verse 16, Aaron and his sons shall eat.

Well, if you just come to this and say, this is an offering to God, but the priests get nearly all of it, and they are going to eat it. Well, I have all kinds of questions about this. Why do the priests eat it? Why doesn't the guy that brought it eat it? Why is it only the priests that eat it? As you continue here, With unleavened bread it shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting they shall eat it.

It can only be eaten within the precincts of the tabernacle, later the temple. It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my offerings made by fire.

It is most holy, like the sin offering and the trespass offering. All the males among the children of Aaron may eat it. Girls can't eat it.

Wives can't eat it. They can bake it, but they can't eat it. They make the pie, and then they give it to the males.

It seems very non-gender inclusive. It seems very non-politically correct. It is only eaten by the males.

It is a statute forever in your generations concerning the offerings made by fire to the Lord. Everyone who touches them must be holy. Everyone who touches them must be holy.

That's not exactly what this says in Hebrew. There is no word for everyone, and there is no word for must. And this is really the key to everything that we've looked at so far.

We know the priests are representative. We know the sons of Aaron are representative. And we know that they are going to eat this offering.

What exactly is the representation that is reflected here? And most importantly, we see that the grain offering is a reflection of our work. We understand. We get the idea.

Whatever I do, I should do heartily as to the Lord, not to men. I should present it as holy. It should have frankincense on it.

I get that. So why these details? We could have gotten that from the first set of principles regarding this sacrifice. But here are these instructions to the priest.

So what component of this grain offering? In other words, when you and I live our lives, do our labors, perform our functions, get through our day, how does this priestly aspect, the priest eating the meal in a holy place, only the males, what does that tell me? What does it tell us in terms of how we live our lives? Because I think I've got the whole lesson without that. I know I should do what I do and dedicate it to the Lord. It should be sanctified.

It should be 100%. Give it all I've got, Romans 12, 1 and 2, for myself. And whatsoever I do, do it heartily.

In Philippians, I get that. So what is this for? Well, we'll seek to answer that question when we come back from the break.