

Christ in the Sacrifices 15-11-15a

This is Sunday, the 15th of November, 2015. We continue our study of Christ and the sacrifices. We are in Leviticus chapter 4. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer, ask God's blessing, seek the active presence and ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

Father, we're grateful, as always, for this opportunity to spend time together in fellowship and in the study of Your Word. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will superintend and enable us to see the truth that is contained in this portion of Your Word, not only for understanding, but more importantly, for our benefit, our insight, our motivation, and our application, so that we can represent Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, here on this earth as His body, that we can shine a light in the midst of an increasingly dark time, and that we can produce that fruit for which You have planted us and watered us and sustained us in this life. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified as we spend this time together in worship this morning.

We pray it in His name, Amen. We have covered now the first three of the five major Levitical sacrifices, Levitical offerings in the book of Leviticus. You will remember that there are a variety of additional sacrifices that are of an occasional nature.

You have some of these sacrifices that are designated to be offered at times other than the occasions listed here. It isn't only when someone feels the need to express dedication to God that a burnt offering from Leviticus chapter 1 is offered. There are many occasions where it is offered as a part of the national life of Israel and so on.

So we have a lot of information here to cover and we're hoping to summarize it in a way that is memorable. We want to remember what we study, ideally. That would be a wonderful blessing.

I wish I could remember every single thing I have ever learned from the Word of God. It is increasingly an occasion for bemusement when I go back and listen to Bible studies that we here have had in the past and the points sound new to me. It is because I don't remember everything that I studied and learned and presented, much less all of the additional wonderful points that come out when we have discussions and fellowship around our study of God's Word.

This is the opportunity to study the nature of the flesh. Even those most important things, the most treasured things are perishable if we don't constantly review them. I have thought about my earliest—have you ever tried to think back, what is the first thing I remember? What is my earliest memory? Of course, I've returned to that question over the course of my three-plus decades of life.

I begin to wonder now if I'm actually remembering those memories or if I'm remembering those memories. You say, well, I remember this, I remember that. Are you giving up time and you don't actually have a brain lock on the experience? We've mentioned and talked before about the fact that largely who we are is founded upon our memories of who we have been and

what our experiences have been.

To wake up some morning with no memory is to erase your identity, and is to rob you of a huge amount of definition. And there's no place where that is more pertinent than our knowledge and our memory of our identity in Christ and our relationship with God in and through Him. To forget that there is no meaning, the things that God has done is a dangerous come to pass in our lives.

This is why God memorializes so many things via ritual for Old Testament Israel. You remember when they crossed the Jordan, they took stones out and set them on the far side and piled them up as a memorial. In days to come when your children ask you what meaneth these stones, you will rehearse for them.

The exhortation that we saw Thursday from Deuteronomy to rehearse to your children the word of God, to write it on your door post, to bind it on your hand, to have it as a front lip between your eyes, all of this is essentially what? Memory. Don't forget. And it is one of the reminders of mortality, of corruption, of the consequences of the fall and of sin that as we age, our memory becomes increasingly faulty and unreliable.

And along with it, and you can think about this, one of the things that is directly tied to our memory is our judgment, our ability to discern, our ability to identify the best path, what is right and what is wrong. How do we do things that are routine? It's built on past experience and memory of how not to do it. When you're using tools, if you've done it without eye protection and had something fly into your eye, that is a memory that guides you into wise behavior in the future, right? If you have a safety-related accident, you become more safety conscious.

What if you forget all of that? Or what if you willfully fail to revisit? Then you suffer bad judgment, the results of bad judgment. So when we think about our study of the Word of God, one of the things that, as a master of the obvious, I will point out by way of reminder, is remembering what we learn from the Word of God is extremely important. It is not enough to hear it, it's not enough to agree with it, it's not enough to think about it in the moment.

The primary result that should come from our fellowship and our study of God's Word is remembering it. It does us no good if we forget. This is nowhere more clearly pointed out in the Word of God than the book of James.

The man who looks into the glass, the mirror of the Word of God, and walks away and forgets what he saw is not going to be a doer of the Word. It is important for us to remember. So we say, well, I'd love to be able to remember just like you, Sam.

I'd love to be able to remember everything. And I don't, just like you. Or probably not quite to the extent that I don't, but how do we remedy that? What is the functional way to avoid losing the memory, losing the recognition, losing the knowledge of what we learned in the Word of God? What would you think? Review.

Reflection. Revisiting. Rehearsal.

Repetition. And that is our choice. I do a fair amount of review and repetition up here, but that is insufficient for our needs.

This is why the Lord Jesus spent time alone, why He spent time in prayer, why He spent time talking about the Word of God to His disciples and to others, because in the conversation, in the asking and answering of questions, in the revisiting of these things, by night and by day, evening and morning and at noon, it is more firmly fixed in our memory. My encouragement to you is, do not neglect that all-important activity. If we do not make a priority out of reviewing and rehearsing and reflecting on the things that we have learned from God's Word, it will go away.

It does not suffice to recognize a truth, to be impressed by it, to think of it in the day, if it doesn't stick, if it doesn't stay. This is the function. This is the connection of my introduction to our study.

This is what the offerings do, isn't it? What are the offerings? They are a repetition. They are a review. They are a rehearsal of those truths that pertain to Israel in the light of their relationship to God.

That's what these things are, or at least what they are designed to be. Do you think people could bring these sacrifices in a perfunctory and habitual manner without really thinking anymore? Do you think that's possible? Do you think they would walk by the temple and hear the ongoing bleating of the sheep and goat noises and bullock noises and bird noises and say, well, you know, that's same-o, same-o. It happens every day.

There's a river of blood coming out from the base of the altar there. There's the ongoing function of the priest and to begin to take it for granted and to not reflect on its meaning and its purpose. Do you think how tragic that these animals are being slain wholesale and the purpose for which they are giving their lives isn't actually being accomplished? Wouldn't that be a tragic thing? You talk about the SPCA and these mournful looking dogs and cats they put on your TV sometimes and, you know, get for the price of a cup of coffee, you can help Fido here find a home.

It is tragic. It's a very distressing thing to see the overproliferation of pet category animals in our country and then their neglect and their abuse and how many of them have to be put down because people have been careless and have not been thoughtful about giving, you know, a little daughter, a little son a pet and they're not equipped and not qualified and they don't have the environment or the consistency to take care of it and it goes to the shelter and then it goes to the graveyard. These sacrifices had the purpose of reminding Israel of detailed doctrines, detailed principles, detailed promises about their relationship with God and for those magnificent, beautiful, perfect animals to be slaughtered for no good reason I think would be tragic in anybody's book.

Anybody with any sensitivity, any compassion, any heart at all would say if this animal is going to have to die it better be in a very good cause. Whose fault is it if that cause is of no effect, if that cause has no effect, if it doesn't bring to mind the doctrines and the principles and the promises and the Word of God, whose fault would it be? Well, the same is true of us because the fulfillment of those sacrifices is in the Lord Jesus Christ and to forget His work, to forget our identity in Him, to forget the Word of God that has been delivered to us by the Savior Himself is exponentially more tragic. It is definitional for us and to forget who we are in Christ is a form of spiritual Alzheimer's that can have tragic consequences just as that disease has tragic consequences when someone turns on a burner and doesn't turn it off, when someone turns on water and doesn't turn it off, when someone goes to a location and can't remember how they got there or where they are going or how to get back, when they begin to lose recognition of their family, when they begin to lose their judgment because they can't remember their experience or their priorities or their values.

And we think that has got to be perhaps, there is no more tragic disease than Alzheimer's and the related syndromes where you lose your memory. It is so painful for the person and for those people around them. Well, you think about that with the function of these sacrifices and who we are in Christ and to have a spiritual Alzheimer's where we don't remember who we are and we don't remember what the blood of Christ has bought is worse.

It is more painful, it is more tragic and it will have more dire consequences for us than any physical disease. So as we think about these Levitical offerings, remember, remember, that's what they're for. We've seen the first three in detail and you will recall.

These are categorized, they can be looked at in many ways, but one of the categories is they are sweet savor offerings. They are sweet aroma offerings and their direction is toward God and because they're sweet savor offerings, what aspect all sacrifice is going to be toward God, all of our life should be lived toward God, but why are they sweet savor offerings? This isn't so much fixing a problem as it is recognizing that a problem has been fixed and enjoying the result. If your hot water tank goes out, I don't know if you've ever had this happen, I think most of us have.

If your hot water tank goes out and you go to take a shower, unless you're some kind of perverse individual that likes cold showers, it's a problem. When you get that tank fixed and you step into the shower and it's hot and there's steam and stuff is fogging up and you are in the warmth of the what I think is perhaps one of the single greatest technological advances in human history, the hot shower, when you're in one, you enjoy it in the light of the fact that that problem has been fixed. That lack of hot water has been remedied by the presence of hot water.

That is a crude illustration of the idea here. The sweet savor offerings recognize that there had been a problem. The foundation upon which dedication of a human life to God rests is that the sin problem has been solved.

It requires the death of the Lord Jesus Christ before anything we do can have any value before God. That's why it is a bloody offering. It is a reminder that it took sacrifice in order to make our service and our dedication possible.

So there is a remembrance of the requirement, but the focus of it is because of that, I am acceptable and I am qualified and I want to exploit that potential with everything I've got just as God's own Son did. Not my will but thine be done. That's the first chapter of Leviticus.

And you'll remember that there are several different forms of that sacrifice, different animals reflecting different aspects of the Lord's work that are remembered. And depending on circumstances, economic circumstances, someone can bring the bullock as a whole burnt offering. They can bring the goat.

They can bring a bird. And as their economic status and their material resources are more diminished, they're delving into the sacrifice as a whole and into the character of the Lord Jesus and into His work becomes actually more profound. It's pretty obvious what a bullock represents.

A little bit less so a ram. And when you get to the bird and you think, well how can this bird be representing the same idea as the bullock, you realize that it isn't. And it is getting closer and closer to the deity of Christ.

Bullocks graze in the plains. Goats get on the mountains. Birds fly in the air.

Closer to God. And you think, well, but I thought the rich were the closest to God. Not according to these sacrifices.

You get closer to the sky. You get closer to God. And to realize that and to remember that is key to the peace that the poor can have.

And when we're talking about the poor, the picture is economic, but the reality is spiritual. This is why Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 and following, blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

They are the ones who will be filled. They are the ones who will inherit the earth. They are the ones who will see God.

They are the ones, that humility that recognizes our poverty of spiritual resource without Christ and without God, who remember that. That's what these sacrifices were designed to do. So beyond the chart we're going to get, beyond the details, beyond decoding, what represents what, if you think about it, really the fundamental idea of these sacrifices is don't forget who you are and why you're here.

Don't forget the work of the Savior who gives us identity and gives us definition, gives us purpose, gives our lives meaning. Don't forget. That's why there are daily sacrifices at the

temple.

That's why this is a regular and repeated thing. Did you ever wonder why the sacrifices aren't a one-time thing? Why don't you just do it once and you're done? Why would you have to do it again? Why can't somebody do it like the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca like a Muslim does? Well, I'll never forget when I was 23 years old I brought the whole burnt offering. Why are these repeated? Why are they necessary to do over and over again? Memory.

Remember. Don't forget. Chapter 2, the grain offering, the Minkah.

The first one was the Ola, whole burnt offering. Offering by fire. Second one is the Minkah, the sweet aroma.

It typically accompanies a burnt offering because, once again, even though it is the only bloodless sacrifice of the five, we never find an example of it being offered alone. But the grain being offered there is a picture of the humanity of Christ. You think about the different kinds.

There were three different kinds. You remember the three different kinds of grain offering? Let's think about this now. Let's see if we can remember it.

There are three kinds of Minkah, three different ways you can prepare this grain. The first one was fine flour. The second one was fine flour anointed with oil, frankincense sprinkled on top.

Remember that? Fine flour. The second one is cakes baked out of fine flour with oil, frankincense sprinkled on top. The third for the poor was whole roasted grains.

If we're thinking about foreshadowing the Lord Jesus, we talked about that. How do you get flour to be fine? You beat it and you beat it and you beat it. You grind it and you grind it and you grind it.

If you're going to make cakes, you do all of that and what? Cook it in the fire. It is ground and judged by fire. Whole roasted grains, they are not shucked, they are not, you know, they are not separated, the husk and the, you know, threshed and separated.

Whole roasted grains. What's one thing that is common to all three of those? The grain is there, but here's an interesting idea. I heard a comment this morning on the way over where a radio pastor was saying that the death of Christ is far more important than His life.

His life is great, but His death is far more important than His life. I was thinking about that because I know the point that is being made. Obviously it is the Lord's death that He came to die and that.

But I personally would not make that particular statement because the meaning of His death is based on His life. His life is essential to His death. I don't think you honestly can say one is more important than the other.

But life and death, I'm just giving you a hint on the answer to my next question. What is common to all three of those grain offerings? If you think about the emphasis on evangelism and reproduction and, you know, it only takes a spark and, well, not that, but here's my point. None of this grain involved in the Mincah, in fact, nothing in any of these sacrifices can reproduce.

Think about the whole roasted grains. Why wouldn't they be raw grains? Wouldn't that be a wonderful picture? You bring the grains and these, remember Jesus said that when the seed falls in the ground, it's buried and then it brings up 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. One thing about the grain that is brought and the animals that is brought, nothing leaves alive.

The grain, the whole roasted ears, what does roasting do? It can't be used as seed if you roast it, right? It can't be used as seed. Everything that is brought before the Lord, there's no life left in it when the process is finished, right? Even the grain that isn't ground is roasted. The life is taken from it.

Drop those roasted grains in the ground, they're never going to sprout. And it is a reminder that death is involved in bringing about the sweet savor. All of these, you know, you can't plant flour, you can't plant cooked bread, and you certainly can't plant roasted heads of grain.

They will not, so where is the life when all of these things speak of death? If he died that we might have life, and if this is a picture of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, where is the life? The life is in the offerer who walks away, unjudged. It is the offerer who is walking away, alive, unqualified, undeserving, unjudged, for the wages of sin, right? Life is given at the altar, a sweet savor comes up before God, and the offerer walks away sanctified, purified, qualified, and enjoined to serve, and that's us. What if the offerer comes and brings that offering, and then walks away and straightway forgets? It's all been a waste.

The purpose of it, that there is a sanctified people of God, all of those chapters we read out of Deuteronomy, chapter 5, chapter 6, chapter 7, chapter 8, chapter 9, into chapter 10 and 11 and 12, 13, 14, all the way through Deuteronomy, what was the emphasis? The ringing bell over and over and over again. You are a people holy to the Lord. You are to obey His commandments.

You represent Him on this earth. That's who you are. Here's another and second aspect of these sacrifices.

The first aspect, they are a memorial, and it's not like a stone memorial. It's not a memorial. It's something that's supposed to make a difference to us, right? Secondly, the Levitical offerings are definitional.

Who gets to offer these offerings? Not just any old body, is it? It is a privilege. There is a small group of people who are allowed to bring these offerings. Hittites, Hivites, Kirkishites, Amorites, Canaanites, Jebusites, put it on anybody's name other than Israel, can't bring these.

Israelites, the covenant people of God, the people of deliverance from Egypt, the people of

Sinai, the people Joshua led into the land, those people are the only people who can enter into this relationship, who have the opportunity to have this sanctification and to serve the Lord God. Both of those things, the importance of remembering and the importance of definition pertain to us directly as well in light of the cross, in light of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The third chapter we looked at, the peace offering.

This was a fellowship offering. This is the only one that the offeror partook of. There is a meal involved.

There is eating of the sacrifice. In all other cases, the sacrifice goes to God. Portions of it may go to the priest.

But in the peace offering, the offeror comes away with something, don't they? It is participatory. We talked about Revelation 3.20. We talked about the Lord speaking of sitting down at the table. His promise in Revelation of providing the hidden manna and so on, entering into.

We saw the elders of Israel, the 70 elders going up part way up the mountain and eating a meal in the presence of God. First and last time they ever do that. But it is a potential that is reflected in the peace offering.

It is a harbinger. It is a portent. It is an anticipation of that day when we can dwell in the presence of God and have fellowship of that nature.

The peace offering. Once again, it could be from the herd, it could be from the flock, or it could be from the goats. Three different types just as there were three different types in the grain offering, just as there were three different types of whole burnt offering.

Whole burnt offering, the determining factor was what can you afford? In the grain offering, it is what do you choose? Any of the three is acceptable. Each of those three reflects a different truth. If you are a thoughtful person, you would select your grain offering on that basis.

In the peace offering, is it from the herd? Is it from the flock? Is it from the goats? There is no bird component there. And the other interesting thing about that third one is that there could be small imperfections in the animal. It did not have to be without spot and without blemish.

There is, after the first two offerings, the order is important here, but for the peace offering, in the same way that an imperfect person can sit and partake of the offering, the offering itself does not have to be completely perfect. What does that remind us of? What is that a picture of? We do not have to be spiritually perfect to have fellowship of that nature. Fellowship with God.

God does not wait for us to be ultimately sanctified. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ even though we still sin, we still fail. But there is provision for our imperfection and it does not preclude or prevent us from having fellowship with God.

So think about this as a third point. The sacrifices are memorial. They are a reminder and an important one and one that we should revisit and think about because secondly they are definitional.

It is who we are and to forget them and to fail to reflect on what we learn is to fail and forget the present and the future in terms of the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. It is worse than Alzheimer's. Thirdly, it is provisional.

I do not mean that in the usual sense of the word. Provisional usually means sort of temporary. I was looking at a piece of Bible software this morning that something came across and it said, oh get this something or other Bible.

It gives you the emphasis. Unlike any other previous Bible, the emphasis that is in Scripture, this Bible will show you the emphasis. So it has got overlays.

It has got this and the other. You think, wow, that sounds pretty good. I might add that to my arsenal of Bibles and library of resources.

So I wondered, well, how much is it? It is free download, free trial. Try it for 21 days, recharge and then you can buy it. I said, well, let us just cut to the chase.

How much is this thing going to be? It is like 70 bucks. I thought, well, it is a good Bible. It gives me some fresh insights or looking at something in a new way.

It might be worth it. So you start reading the fine print. First of all, they have not done the Old Testament yet.

It is only the New Testament. Secondly, the New Testament is not finished. It is provisional.

It is not polished to the high shine that you will eventually see. But if you buy it now, you will get free updates. If you buy it now, you will get a discount if and when we get the Old Testament done.

I thought, well, for somebody, and don't get me wrong here, anybody that is working on a Bible, they are good people. But I thought it is a little bit less than straightforward to say, buy this Bible and what it is is an incomplete New Testament. What they are trying to do is get the funding pump going.

They say it is non-profit and it is all going to go back in the ministry. God bless them for that. But it is a little bit of a fan dance there when you call this thing a Bible when it is actually only a New Testament and it is not even a finished New Testament.

It is provisional. I was thinking about that word provisional because when I think of provisional, I don't want to think about, well, it is sort of a stop gap until the real thing comes along. I think of provision.

If something is provisional, it provides what I need. And that is what the sacrifices did in Israel. It provides.

And it provides even in the light of our imperfection. Even in the light of the fact that we are going to err and come short again and again. God says, there is an offering you can bring.

It is the peace offering. There is peace. On the basis of the whole burnt offering, on the basis of the menka and the recognition of the work of Jesus Christ in His humanity, the accomplishments related to His death, you imperfect people can bring imperfect sacrifices and you can partake of the sacrifice in the presence of God and it is all good.

God has found a way to incorporate the imperfect into His plan. And it is based on, you can't do this without the other. But we are imperfect and we should not be discouraged by our failures for very long.

It is always discouraging and I think we ought to be discouraged. There is an element of godly sorrow that is legitimate. Notice I said an element of.

But we ought to feel bad when we screw up. And we ought to try to be more motivated and more diligent. But don't be stopped.

Don't give up. Don't say, well, I am never going to get this right. What is the point? I have talked to people.

I spent a long time talking to one individual in particular about, well, my shortcomings are just too great. My failures and my history and my past and look at the situation I am in now and this is all of my own. God won't have anything to do with me.

Look at the peace offering. You can bring an imperfect animal and you can act like a priest. You can sit in the presence of God and partake of that and enjoy God's blessing, God's approval, God's presence, God's power and it is not perfect.

But it is okay. That is our life in the present. So this is another thing that the sacrifices ought to impress on us.

We are going to go months into the future. We will move to new studies and when you think back you are not going to be able to remember what every detail of these sacrifices means. I have done these sacrifices in detail and I don't remember it.

But what should we remember? What are the big ideas that should always stick in our mind? And I am suggesting to you that these are those. Don't forget the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and what it accomplishes. Revisit it, remember it, rehearse it because remembering these things makes us who we are.

It is definitional and it points us toward God's provision. God has made a way through Christ so that we can be related to Him even though we are corrupt and we are fallen and we will

continue to make mistakes. But Lord willing we are heading on the upward way, new heights we are gaining every day, still praying as we are bound.

Lord plant my feet on higher ground. These sacrifices remind us of the basis and the means, the new and living way that has been opened to us right into the Holy of Holies and we are not yet perfect. So that is the big idea.

We are going to move into the last two sacrifices which are dealing directly with sin and trespass. But these five offerings, all of the offerings from beginning to end ultimately as they point to Jesus Christ point to defining us. We have the privilege of entering into these.

We have the privilege of being Romans 12, 1 and 2 people. We have the privilege of having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the privilege of partaking in His presence, of the Lord Jesus coming in and sitting down at our table and supping with us, setting a table before us in the presence of our enemies, anointing our heads with oil.

So that is what we must take away at a minimum from this study. If we don't get that, all of the little details and what is the difference between a sheep and a goat pales in significance. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back we are going to look at these final two offerings and their details in the light of the first three because they are non-sweet savor offerings. We will see that when we come back.