

Christ in the Sacrifices 16-01-17a

We will turn now to the first four chapters of Leviticus where we are going to then turn to the fifth and sixth chapters of Leviticus. Having found the first four, we can build on that to five and six. The Trespass Offering, the Ascent Offering, those two really traverse chapter four, chapter five, and the first few verses of chapter six.

So anywhere in that general area, because we are reviewing and summarizing now the elements of these sacrifices, specifically looking at their anticipation and reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's one thing to have these sacrifices and even to perform them. It is something else to see in them exactly what the Lord Jesus has done for us in His life and in His death and in His resurrected glory now at the right hand of the Father awaiting the time when He will return and take us to Himself.

Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. It gives each of us individually a chance to ensure that we are squared away and in the right status to benefit from our fellowship, our worship, and our instruction in and through the Word of God. Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to spend time together studying Your Word, being mutually encouraged by presence, by conversation, by enthusiasm, by diligence, and by perseverance, not only individually, but as we join together looking to You for our strength, our guidance, and the fulfillment of the purpose of our lives.

We pray that Your Holy Spirit will be with us and be our teacher, help us to remember and understand the pertinence of the things that we have learned to the thoughts and actions, the decisions and motivations that drive each day from now until the time when the Lord Jesus appears in the sky to take us to Himself and move us into that next and perhaps greatest phase of our service and function before You. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen. It is a very definitional thing to realize that on this day, which is January the 17th of 2016, we assemble as members of a very distinct and unique group.

We are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. These sacrifices are really characterized and made distinct by that element of blood. Where in the Bible does it ever tell us what the significance of the blood is? Why there is blood in these sacrifices? It actually only tells us in one place.

There's only one place in the entire Bible that specifically says why the blood is included in the offerings, is a part of the sacrifices, and is therefore so central. And that is in our book over about 13 chapters from Leviticus 4. Go to Leviticus 17. It's interesting that as much as we know about the blood of Jesus Christ, as much as is said about that, the 1 John passages, we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us, the blood of Christ, the blood so central when it is poured out at the base of the altar, when it is sprinkled on various things, when it is brought into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, so much apart from the earliest time, and yet there's only one verse in the entire Bible that specifically says why they

are blood sacrifices.

That's Leviticus 17.11. Let's read this context beginning at verse 1. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, This is the thing which the Lord has commanded, saying, Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer an offering to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off among his people. To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting to the priest, and offer them as peace offerings to the Lord.

And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the Lord." Now you may already be scratching your head when the Lord speaks to Moses saying, Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, Whatever man of the house of Israel kills an ox, lamb, goat in the camp, or outside the camp, and doesn't bring it as a sacrifice, he's both guilty and is to be cut off from his people. So what about dinner? I want to have goat chops, or I want to have lamb chops, or I want to have ox chops for dinner. Whatever part of the animal we're preparing, I want roast, or steak, or ham, or, oh, ham, wait, oops.

Notice it says an ox, or lamb, or goat in the camp, or outside the camp. We have to respect the context. This is why context is so important.

If you just pulled this out, it would mean that any time anybody killed anything to eat, it would have to be first offered as a sacrifice. Well, what if you live up in Galilee, in the land? Have you got to run down to Jerusalem to the priest and offer an offering before the door of the temple, before you can go back home and have food? When it says the Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to the children of Israel, this automatically puts it in a sacrificial context. Aaron and his sons need to know about this because this is a sacrificial killing.

This is a killing for sacrifice, not for dinner. And what is the purpose of this injunction? What is the purpose of this commandment? No phony baloney sacrifices of animals. If you're out there in the field and you offer a sacrifice, or you're in the camp and you offer a sacrifice, that sacrifice better be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and offered as a sacrifice to the Lord God, where the priests can ensure that the procedures are followed and that it doesn't veer off into perversion and into idolatry, into the worship of other gods.

That's the purpose. That's the function. And so in this context, the slaying of an ox, a lamb, or a goat, wherever you do it, it, in the context of sacrifice, needs to be brought before the Lord.

And that sacrifice needs to be superintended as it is offered on God's altar by and in front of and under the oversight of God's priest. Right? That's what we're talking about here. Verse 6,

the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

This is where that blood goes. The fat is offered as a sweet aroma. They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons after whom they have played the harlot.

This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations. So you see how the contextual clue at the beginning is verified and confirmed at the end. Verse 8, also you shall say to them, who's them? Aaron, sons of Aaron, and all the children of Israel, whatever man of the house of Israel or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer it to the Lord, that man shall be cut off from among his people.

What's the difference in this and what he said in the preceding section? Isn't it the same thing? Strangers. Can strangers offer sacrifices in Israel? Apparently so, because we have here a procedure. When one of the strangers that dwell among you offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, in Leviticus 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 that we've reviewed so far, did it say anything about he must be of the tribes of Israel? He must be a blood descendant of Abraham? Was there any indication of that? Could Uriah the Hittite bring a sacrifice? Could the family of a sojourner who has chosen to worship the God of Israel and join himself to the people of God, can you bring an offering and a sacrifice? Yes.

But when he does it, if he does not bring it, verse 9, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer it to the Lord, that man shall be cut off from among his people. Whatever man of the house of Israel or of the strangers who dwell among you who eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. Why? For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

The life of the flesh is in the blood, it is the blood that makes atonement. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, no one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood. Now, what's the whole deal here on eating blood? I want to read you something from a source, if I can find it.

This is something that was published for the Society of Biblical Literature, and it's an article that has, I don't agree with everything in it, but I like part of what he says here. And it has to do with the nature of sacrifice. He points out that the, and I don't know where it is, so I'll just summarize his point.

The sacrifices are not primarily viewed the way we use the word sacrifice today. When you say sacrifice, well, I'll make a sacrifice, I lose something, right? It's a deficit and a detriment to me. If I'm going to sacrifice my time, or if I'm going to sacrifice my ticket to an event, or whatever, I've lost it.

This gentleman's point was that sacrifice in ancient Israel was primarily viewed, not so much as in terms of its loss to the individual, as it was the giving over of something to someone else. And that's why menka is so often used for the early sacrifices, because menka means gift. And it wasn't so much the idea that, well, this thing is just going to be lost, but it is given over to the Lord, the way Hannah gave over Samuel.

Samuel, in one sense, was a menka to the Lord. It was the greatest sacrifice she could offer, but he's not lost to her. She can visit him and make him close year by year and so on, but he's given over.

I give him over to the Lord. Well, from our point of view, if you give over an animal by killing it and chopping it up and putting it on an altar, well, that's pretty well lost. It's pretty well destroyed and gone.

So how does this concept hold up in that light? Well, this is the idea that I appreciate here. In the view of God's sacrificial system, the giving over of the animal is indeed accomplished by spilling its blood and the life of the flesh is in the blood. And the blood, that life, is poured out before the Lord.

It's at the base of the altar or it's in the Holy of Holies, it's sprinkled before the curtain or wherever it may be. That blood is the primary part of that offering. Now, when it says the life of the flesh is in the blood, can I pour blood into a glass and the glass is alive? Can I, you know, blood will just confer life, anything it touches, anywhere it, I mean, that's not the case.

Symbolically speaking, the life of the flesh is in the blood. It is a physical fact that you need your blood as a higher order mammal, but life is really something else. You can not be alive and your blood may still be circulating.

They can have you on a machine and you're dead and gone. It is the invisible quality of life that is associated with the blood. And in the ancient world, the most common way to lose your life was to have your blood spilled.

The edge of the sword, the spear, the sacrificial knife, whatever it may be, that is how a human or an animal would lose its life. And so the concept of being alive with your blood inside you or being dead because you've lost your blood, blood and life are associated. And God makes that explicit here.

The life of flesh is in the blood. So here's the point. What is happening to the life of the animal here? We would say, well, yesterday I had this strong, healthy ox or ram or lamb.

Today I don't. I lost it. But the concept that God intended and that faithful Israelites understood is this is a giving over of the life.

That's why the Ola, the whole burnt offering, when you use that animal as your representative, you're not saying, oh Lord, I die before you. It's not the killing that is in view. If you take that

animal and say, I identify this animal as my substitute and I send his life to you, it is a transfer of life.

It is a giving over of that life, not a loss of life. And isn't this the essence of our faith, Old Testament and New Testament that the life we live, we live to God and at death, our life is not lost. Our life goes into the presence of God, right? We move into those divine realms.

Well, this has an interesting implication that I'd never really thought of before, because the Bible is apparently silent on what's going to happen to Major when he dies, what happens to animals when they die. We think, well, you know, humans have a spirit that goes upward and when we die and so on, but animals are different. Well, if you look at the sacrificial system in this light, looking at Leviticus 17, 11, the life of the flesh is in the blood and these animals that are God's creation and are offered to God, those that function in the realm of nature, red in tooth and claw.

There's a baby seal that is food for a killer whale. There's a rabbit that is food for a coyote. There's this necessary life and death scenario in nature, the antelope and the lion and the whole carnivorous aspect of nature.

If you think about that picture, because what may be known of God is manifest in his creation. What happens when there is prey that becomes food for the predator? There is life that is in a sense transferred to sustain life. There was life here.

This thing would not live without its food. Now there is life that continues. And so there, if you think about the generations of birth that transfer life to a new generation and of predation that transfers life in a sense to the predator, there is this ongoing presence of life.

And in many cases, that life is transferred by the shedding of blood. Well, I say that to point out that the Lord Jesus Christ gave his life for us on the cross, right? His blood accomplishes the remission of our sins. It's not his physical blood.

It is the giving over of his life. The Lord Jesus did not lose his life, did he? He said, I'm not losing my life. I'm giving my life and I will take it up again.

The Lord Jesus is alive today. It wasn't a loss of life that accomplished our atonement and our redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, all of those wonderful judicial and forensic operations that took place on the cross. It was the complete and total giving over of the life of the Lord Jesus in the service of the Father that accomplished our salvation.

The Lord Jesus wasn't looking ahead at the cross, thinking, well, that is the end and the finish of my existence. It is the highest and the most difficult giving over of self that there has ever been. And the Lord Jesus did that ultimately and completely on our behalf.

So what this does is shift our perspective slightly on sacrifice because instead of being the bloody slaughter and ending of life for an animal, we look at it as transfer. Now, this could

possibly mean and include the fact that whatever life that God has created on this earth of the higher orders that have the life of the flesh and their blood and so on, and in particular, the sacrificial animals that were presented by Israel, there is a suggestion and it's just a hypothesis here that there may be an actual transfer of those animals into the kingdom of God. It's going to be a big kingdom.

The kingdom of the Father is a lot bigger than this earth. And if you give over something to God, it may come back in God's kingdom. God may bring them all back, all of the pets, all of the sacrificial animals, the flocks and the herds that lived and died, those that were predated.

It's just a thought. It is, I will say this much, you know, I'm not a big fan of, I go along with J. Vernon McGee, you know, are there dogs in heaven? Well, not in my part of heaven, you know, the yapping and the barking and the poodles and the rest of it that are just yappers. I love Popeye, but that young dog can get really excited and just yap.

And you wish there was a little yap off switch and bless his heart. You know, he's, he's made the way he is and he can't help it as with all small dogs that are just yappers. And there's people that enjoy that and God bless them, but they're not going to be, I like to think in my part of heaven, I don't look to the idyllic realms of glory with just, you know, constant yip, yip, yip.

It just isn't what I would consider paradise. The, for some people it might be, and I'm sure there will be, you know, neighborhoods that dog friendly, not so, not so dog friendly, major I'd, I'd keep, you know, certain cats we've had, I'd, I'd keep in a heartbeat, but to each his own. I just am suggesting to you that regardless of what you think about the actual animals themselves, the notion here is giving over the element of sacrifice that is central here is not annihilation.

We tend to think, well, that bull that was offered to sanctify Aaron and his sons, uh, was annihilated. It's gone. It's really not the view.

It's life was given completely over in the service of God. That's the concept of the OLA. Are we willing to give our lives completely over to the service of God? Greater love hath no man than this, then to give his life, give his life for another, right? It is the giving over idea that I want to focus on here.

And God may illustrate that. He may well illustrate that by saying all of those animals that were given over to be food for mankind that were given over to be sacrificial, that were given over to keep nature operating in a balance. Uh, and the, uh, carnivorousness in particular that, that characterizes and helps to illustrate in nature, the glory of God and the, the balance and perfection of his plan in incorporating what is imperfect.

It's so interesting to me that God has a perfect plan that has incorporated imperfect elements and you take imperfect things and you make a perfect whole. Only God could do that. If you take imperfect parts and build a machine, is that machine going to work? No, all of its parts are flawed and incomplete and out of tolerance.

And, you know, the engine is going to stick and the rotor's not going to turn and the electricity is not going to flow because it's got bad capacitors and bad bearings and bad, uh, asymmetrical pieces. It leaks, it sticks, it doesn't work. God has taken imperfect people such as you and me.

He has taken the imperfection that is inherent in the fallen creation that groans waiting for our redemption. And why would creation groan waiting for our redemption if creation perishes generation by generation? This is another angle. If the creation is in, in essence, groaning, waiting for the adoption to be complete and for us to be promoted to glory, wouldn't that creation be there to stop groaning and to experience the relief and the enjoyment of the perfection of God's eternal kingdom? So I offer that to those of you who hope that their pets are coming back, those of you who are rightfully shocked at the wholesale slaughter of animals in Israel.

This may have been kind of like the slaughter of the babies in Canaan, uh, that we initially are horrified by. God says, go in and kill the women and children. We think, well, that's just unspeakably, uh, tragic and awful.

But if you think if this is the means of giving them over and transferring them into a much better and more perfect environment, then on those occasions where God specifically mandates it, i.e. arise, Peter, kill and eat, go, oh, Israel to the temple and offer your sacrifices. Um, that in those cases there is actually a coming back. It is a giving over to God.

God has them in his care and in his custodianship, and he is going to bless them because they were a part of that giving over and because they have, uh, effectively illustrated this point, but it's the point that counts. We can speculate on what exactly happens to the physical animals here. What we know for a certitude is that it reflects this giving over.

If I deny myself and take up my cross and follow the Lord Jesus, if I present myself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, this is a giving over. I am not losing. I am offering and transferring myself into God's presence.

And this sort of makes sense of a lot of things. The smoke of the offering coming up before God in effect is an illustration or a suggestion that the life of that animal has gone to God, the God who gave it, and the God who gave it can give it again. God gave you and me life at our birth, right? If we die, can God give us our life again? Absolutely.

God can give again any life that he creates and confers. He's not limited. And if we are obedient, if we understand this idea that the Lord Jesus Christ fully and completely gave himself over to doing the will of the Father, and if we do that, we can have complete confidence that the God who gave us life will give it back again.

You remember Jesus talking to the disciples, and he said, if you have given up family and business and land and houses and whatever it is in this life, you will have it in multiplied return in the kingdom. Those that have suffered a temporary loss in this life are going to have that

plus in the future. We can't lose dedicating ourselves to God, giving ourselves over to his service.

We think, well, but it will cost me. It will cost me socially. It will cost me financially.

It will cost me workwise. There will be a cost. And all we do is focus on the cost and the loss instead of focusing on the omnipotent God who, if he gives us something and we give it over to him, he will give it back with interest.

He will give it back multiplied, exponentially so. And as people are fond of saying in the financial realm in churches, you can't out-give God. You plunk money on the plate and you will prosper.

This is the prosperity gospel. But there is a spiritual sense in which you really cannot out-give God. Whatever we give over to him, we don't have anything that he didn't give us to begin with.

And to the extent that we are able to dedicate it to him and return it to him and give it over to him, it will not be a loss. It will always be a gain. And I would not be at all surprised that the cattle on a thousand hills that God owns may be those sacrificial cattle that the Israelites offered to him.

Why does it say he's got the cattle on a thousand hills? He's got a lot of sacrificial oxen and sheep and goats. And it would be so consistent with this idea and this principle that nothing we give over to God is a loss. It is part of what God has to begin with.

What he gives to us by way of stewardship, we dedicate and return back to him, and then he blesses us in unimaginably great ways. So this is, I think, an important concept to grasp as we think about and begin to conclude our study of these sacrifices and the representation of Jesus Christ in them. At the core and at the heart of it is the Ola idea of full personal commitment to God, a willingness to give over whatever we have and whatever we are to him, knowing that in his hands and in his plan and in his purpose, it will never be a loss to us.

It will reflect his glory and it will result in acceptance and in blessing for us. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll resume our detailed summary as we finish up these Levitical sacrifices in Leviticus 1 through 6.