

99-05-16a

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning to the book of Exodus for our scripture reading. Exodus chapter 29. We are continuing in Genesis our study of, at this point, the life of Abraham.

We have seen the ascent of Mount Moriah and Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, his only son, at the command of God. At the critical moment, the angel of the Lord speaks and stays Abraham's hand. And Abraham lifts his eyes and looks and sees a ram caught by its horns in a thicket.

And this becomes the sacrificial offering in the stead of Isaac. My curiosity causes me to ask, why was this a ram as opposed to a lamb or a goat or a bullock or any one of the other animals that were legitimate for sacrifice in Israel? God could have caused doves or pigeons to descend and be available for an offering, but it is specifically a ram. One of the things we will examine this morning, before we conclude our study of this episode on Abraham's life, is to try to determine for ourselves the significance of this particular animal in the economy of God's picturing, the worship life, the ritual life in Israel that God ordained, and what the meaning of this particular animal is as it reflects the work of Christ.

In that connection, our scripture reading this morning finds one of the most prominent applications of this symbolism in the consecration of the Levitical priests, the consecration of Aaron and his sons involved the use not just of one ram, but of two. In Exodus chapter 29, this is what you shall do to hallow them for ministering to me as priests. This, of course, these are Aaron and his sons.

Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil. You shall make them of wheat flour. You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket with the bull and the two rams.

And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod. You shall put the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban.

And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him. Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them, and you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them. The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute.

So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons. Then in verses 10 through 14 you have the offering of the bull, but I want to skip to verse 15 that deals with the rams. You shall also

take one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram.

And you shall kill the ram, and you shall take its blood and sprinkle it around on the altar. All around on the altar. Then you shall cut the ram in pieces, wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its pieces and with its head.

And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the Lord. It is a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.

This is the ram, this sacrifice most nearly reflects the sacrifice that we have been studying of the ram up on Mount Moriah after the release of Isaac. But look at verse 19. You shall also take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram.

Then you shall kill the ram and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons. On the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. And sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.

And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments. On his sons and on the garments of his sons with him. And he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh, for it is a ram of consecration. One loaf of bread, one cake made with oil, and one wafer from the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the Lord. And you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons.

And you shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord. You shall receive them back from their hands and burn them on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the Lord. It is an offering made by fire to the Lord.

Then you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration and wave it as a wave offering before the Lord. And it shall be your portion. And from the ram of the consecration you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering, which is waved, and the thigh of the heave offering, which is raised, that which is for Aaron and that which is for his sons.

It shall be from the children of Israel for Aaron and his sons by a statute forever. For it is a heave offering. It shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, that is their heave offering to the Lord.

And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons after him to be anointed in them and to be consecrated in them. That son who becomes priest in his place shall put them on for

seven days when he enters the tabernacle of meeting to minister in the holy place. And you shall take the ram of the consecration and boil its flesh in the holy place.

Then Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made to consecrate and to sanctify them. But an outsider shall not eat them because they are holy.

And if any of the flesh of the consecration offerings or of the bread remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten because it is holy. Thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons according to all that I have commanded you.

Seven days you shall consecrate them. And you shall offer a bull every day as a sin offering for atonement. You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it and you shall anoint it to sanctify it.

Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it and the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy. He goes on from there to talk about the procedures for the daily offerings.

I think that the Levitical offerings are perhaps some of the most important and some of the least understood symbols in all of Scripture. You will remember that we've discussed in times past the fact that there is more Christology in the Old Testament, specifically in Leviticus and in the ritual provisions and procedures for worship in Israel, than there is in the entire New Testament. The work of Christ is illustrated and amplified and explained in great detail in these offerings, and yet they are little understood.

I would venture to say that if you went to a room full of 100 believers, chosen at random, and asked each one, what is the significance of the legs or the entrails or the skin? What is the difference between the offerings that involve bulls or the offerings that involve sheep or goats or birds? What's the difference in a wave offering and a heave offering? Why is there grain and oil involved? Virtually all of us would be hard-pressed to display any knowledge of that beyond the obvious idea that an animal has given its life and its blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Without the sprinkling of blood, nothing in the old order was sanctified.

That typically exhausts our knowledge of the offerings, and yet the Lord Jesus Christ is personified. His person is exemplified in those offerings, and to know the details of those offerings is to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to know His work. We cannot stop at this point and embark on a detailed study of these things, but I think by way of example, when we look at the significance of just a few of the details regarding this one sacrifice, the ram burnt offering, and the ram sin offering that is offered here in chapter 29 of Exodus, this will explain for us why it is a ram that is found on top of Mount Moriah, why

it is a ram that is offered in the place of Isaac, and what that means to us specifically when we look at the work of Jesus Christ.

I am going to forego giving you a lot of references or a lot of parallel passages because I want to finish and move forward our chapter in Genesis this morning, chapter 22. But I would like to point out just a few things that we find out about the significance of the ram, especially from our scripture reading here in Exodus 29. As we have already noted, if you begin at the beginning in Leviticus, the bull seems to be the main animal for offering.

In Israel, the sin offering is exemplified by the bull. Here in chapter 29, we have the bull and the ram. Not only one ram, but two.

The bull or the bullock was a domestic animal from ancient times. Cattle were kept in herds from the very beginning. Abel was a shepherd.

You get the idea that very soon after that, when you look at the descendants of Seth and of Cain, you find that many of them become herdsmen and begin to keep cattle. Of course, the utility of every part of the animal goes without saying, from the skin to the meat to the milk. It reminds me of what they said in the Little House books when they would slaughter a hog.

Laura Ingalls' mother used to say that they used every part of the hog except the oink, right down to the tail, the cracklings, the head cheese. Every part of the animal was used in some fashion. Literally, even the hooves were boiled.

The only part that wasn't used was the sound that the animal made when it was alive. The same was true of these herd animals, both beef and sheep. One of the differences that you note between cattle and sheep is that sheep could be found in the wild.

There were sheep and goats, whether they had escaped or whatever, but they were capable in some ways of existing on their own. You would find them especially up in the mountains where they had some safety from predators. The sure-footedness of the goat is a well-known truism.

You often think of a ram up in the mountains with his curly horns and so forth, whether it's a male sheep or a male goat. But cattle you didn't typically find in the wild. These are just symbolic of a herd animal, a domesticated animal.

So there is the idea of strength embodied both in the bullock, the male of the herd, and the ram, the male of the flock. There are other sacrifices that involve heifers and ewes, who are the females of the herd and of the flock. But here specifically with the idea of the ram with his curled horns, you have a symbol of strength, you have a symbol of independence.

Horns in particular spoke of power. In the songs that we're examining in our New Testament study in the Gospel of Luke, Mary and Hannah both talk about God exalting the horn. The horn is a symbol of strength, came to be a symbol of royalty.

In particular, there is the foreshadowing of kingship in the horns of the ram, more so even than a bullock or any other animal. You have the horns, which symbolize strength, which symbolize authority, and imply or foreshadow the idea of kingship. When you come to the ram here in Exodus 29, the details of what are done with the parts of the ram, each of these has significance.

Again, I could document these from other places in Scripture, but let me just mention them as we move through. Verse 15, you take one ram. Aaron and his sons put their hands on the head of the ram.

This, of course, is the idea of the transfer of responsibility for sin. Laying the head on the hand is identification. This is, after all, the whole burnt offering.

It is an offering of atonement. It is for the purging of sin. The transfer of the penalty for sin from the individual who is guilty to the animal who is not.

So, you will notice that the laying of hands on the head of the ram takes place before the death of the ram. When you think about Christ on the cross, you have the three hours of darkness. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This transference of the sins of the world to Jesus Christ took place before his death, not at his death.

It is interesting to note, we don't often stop and think about some aspects of Christ's work, but Jesus Christ bore our sins while he was alive. He bore our sins in his body on the tree. It is not at the point of his death that he is imputed with our sins.

It is beforehand. And the three hours of darkness that covered that awful penalty, Jesus was alive the whole time. This ram is alive when Aaron and his sons place their hands on its head.

After that, verse 16, you shall kill the ram, you shall take its blood, and sprinkle it all around on the altar. The altar itself is sanctified. This is the altar on which the animal is going to be burnt, and the fire and the smoke are going to ascend.

But before that takes place, the slain animal's blood is taken, and the altar itself is sanctified by that blood. Then in verse 17, you shall cut the ram in pieces, wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its pieces and with its head. And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar.

It is a burnt offering to the Lord. It is a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord. This ram emphasizes and speaks directly about the work of Christ in its God-word application.

You remember that for convenience, we often summarize the work of Jesus Christ under three headings, redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation. This is the God-word side of the work of Jesus Christ. Propitiation.

God is propitiated. Reconciliation is the man-word side. We are reconciled to God.

Redemption is the payment of the price. It is the sin-word aspect of the work of Christ. So you have work directed towards sin, toward us, and most importantly, toward God.

This ram, the whole burnt offering, emphasizes the divine perspective on this. There is no application of this blood to people, as we see in the second sacrifice. The altar itself has to be sanctified so that the offering will be acceptable in God's sight.

Sprinkling blood on the altar doesn't do anything for man. This qualifies the altar to be the place where this sacrifice will be burnt. So it is sanctification by blood.

So the cutting of this ram in pieces, the washing of the entrails and the legs, and then the placing of these pieces in the head on the altar, and then the entire thing be consumed. Why don't you just flop the animal up there and burn the whole thing? Why does it have to be cut? Why does it have to be washed? Well, we know already that this is going to be something to do with the Godward side of the ritual. What it represents is from the divine perspective.

The cleaving of the animal in pieces, we're reminded of what we've seen in Abraham's experience with the cleaving of the animals in half and the walking between the pieces, the passing of the smoking pot and the burning torch between the pieces. The exposing of the innermost parts of things. Man looks on the outward appearance.

God looks on the heart. The hidden things are brought to light. There is nothing that is not open and exposed in God's sight.

This animal is not only spotless and without blemish on the outside, but its inner purity is revealed and is insured by the washing of the entrails, the washing of the legs. There is no impurity. If this animal collected some dust when it was walked up to the place of sacrifice, that's cleansed before it's allowed to be offered to God.

The entrails, with the idea that if this animal, unbeknownst to man, had eaten something that was unclean or had any sort of hidden imperfection, the washing symbolizes sanctification on the inside. How can you picture sanctification of the animal itself? Well, you can't sprinkle it with its own blood. Blood itself is a picture of sanctification, so you use water in this case.

Water purifies. You have the washing of water and the renewing of the Holy Ghost as a picture in the New Testament. But this pictures the complete qualification, cleansing, and acceptability of this offering for God.

What do entrails speak of? These are the thoughts and intents of the heart. This animal is not only without spot and blemish on the outside, in its appearance, in its form and outward shape, but also on the inside. And it is a reminder that that which comes before God can't only be acceptable on the outside, it has to be acceptable on the inside.

So the animal is cut apart to expose what's inside, and what's inside is cleansed. The legs, which are what move the animal around, we have a lot of symbolism of legs and feet in terms of walk, of what you do. What does an animal do? Well, it basically walks around.

That's one of its primary activities. Well, any misstep that this animal may have made into the mud or into the mire, this is cleansed before that animal is acceptable to God. So you cut it in pieces, you wash its entrails and its legs, put them with its pieces and with its head.

Once again, you have the idea of volition, of choice. Every different part of this animal is emphasized as needing to be acceptable in God's sight. Then the entire ram is burnt on the altar.

You'll notice that this ram is not flayed, it's not skinned. There's no mention made of the skin, because we're going to see the significance of the skin later on. This has significance on the manward side of the sacrifice.

We know that God made coverings for Adam and Eve out of skin. Well, this is the Godward side, and so the skin isn't emphasized. It's not mentioned.

But this whole burnt offering is a burnt offering to the Lord, it says in verse 18. It is a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord. And you'll notice that this one comes first.

Logically speaking, propitiation takes place before reconciliation or even redemption. It is the satisfaction of God's righteousness and justice that is essential for everything else to take place. So this sacrifice, the sacrifice that is specifically emphasizing and directed at God, this one comes first.

Then in verse 19, you take the other ram. And Aaron and his son shall put their hands on the head of that ram as well. So once again, we have identification with the first ram.

These two rams, it reminds me, I think, so often of Leviticus 14, in the ritual of the cleansing of the leper, where you have the two birds, and they're separate and distinct, and yet they're identified. One is killed, and in that case the other is set free, sprinkled with the blood of the first. But when you have a doubling like this, a lot of times the two things will be identified so that you're looking at two different aspects of the same sacrifice.

How can you bring out the fact that there is more than one emphasis? Well, you can use two animals, but they're the same animal in terms of purpose. This animal also has hands laid on its head. So there is the same act of sacrifice in view.

Verse 20, you shall kill the ram and take some of its blood. This blood, rather than being applied to the altar, is applied to the priests. It's applied to Aaron and to his sons first.

Take some of its blood, put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. We've talked before. Again, this same application is made to the leper in Leviticus 14.

The right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right toe is applied to him. And in that connection we talked about the fairly straightforward symbolism of this. This is the ear speaking of what you take in, what you hear, what you expose yourself to.

The reminder that I think there may also be an echo of the idea of the pierced-ear slave who, when he voluntarily dedicated himself to the service of his master, would be backed up to the door of the house and his ear would be pierced with an awl. His right earlobe. And that, of course, would become bloody.

It was a reminder of his voluntary dedication to service. But you also have the idea that this is what you choose to hear. What are you dedicating yourself to? You're going to hear the word of the Lord.

You're going to listen to the voice of the Lord. The right thumb, this is what you do, what you set your hand to do, your actions. The right toe, the way you walk.

Even in Greek, talking about the spiritual walk, the verb is peripateo. Peri, around, pateo, to walk. So the sanctification and the dedication, both of what you take in and what you put forth in life, is reflected here.

Now my question is, how come they don't do both ears and both thumbs and both feet? Why is it only the right side that's dedicated? I haven't found anybody to offer any suggestions on this, but I think, my suspicion is, that this is a subtle reminder that in the law there is a lack. You can't get the whole job done under the shadows of the law. It's not until Christ comes that our hearts will be sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies will be washed with pure water.

And the sanctification that takes place through the work of Christ is complete. It is entire. Our whole body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

In this case, the good side, the right side, is the side of favor. Even today in Arab countries, it's an insult if you touch something with your left hand, especially in the more strict Muslim areas. The left hand, that's the hand that you use in connection with bodily

functions.

That's sort of the defiled hand. You'll notice that everyone eats with their right hand. People will only touch one another with the right hand, even today in the Middle East, because the left hand is the sinister hand, not the dexter hand.

In the Bible you have the sheep on the right hand, the goats on the left. Sit thou at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. And so it's the right side that is the good side.

And to the extent that Israel was capable of doing what was good, that is the side that's sanctified. But it's interesting to me that they didn't just sprinkle them all over with blood, or that they didn't touch both earlobes and both thumbs and both feet. And I think it's a reminder that even in these shadows, it's incomplete.

It isn't until that which is perfect comes that that which is in part will be done away. So you take the blood that is on the altar. Notice this blood is on the altar now.

That first sacrifice has already been made. The altar has already been sanctified by the first sacrifice and the blood of that first ram. And so now Moses is to go to the altar.

And this blood that came from the first ram, the whole burnt offering, and was sprinkled on the altar to sanctify it, he's already got a whole bunch more blood from the second ram. But God says, no, you go to the altar and you take from that first ram's blood that's been sprinkled on the altar. You go get that, mix it with anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments.

What's this a reminder of? That because of the satisfaction of the righteousness and justice of God, there is a calling. That blood is mixed with anointing oil. This is the commission.

This is the enablement, the oil speaking of God the Holy Spirit. But because we have been qualified, because of the satisfaction of God's righteousness and justice, these priests now, that's a part of their calling. It isn't the second ram's blood.

It's the first ram's that's mixed with the anointing oil and sprinkled on them and on their garments. These are the garments that identify them as priests. This is function.

They've been called to a function. They've been called to a specific service. And that calling is based on that first sacrifice.

This blood of sanctification comes from the first sacrifice, which is entirely God's satisfaction with the first offering. That's what makes that anointing and that service possible. The second ram speaks of their service.

It is their sanctification that takes place with that second. And this is their individual

dedication, their ear, their thumb, their toe. But the garments which God provides them with, which God specified, God designed, that are the marks of their office and their calling, these are sprinkled.

In other words, their own personal holiness isn't what qualifies them for that calling. It's the sanctification of the sacrifice by application. It isn't our personal holiness that qualifies us for the calling with which we are called.

It's the holiness of Jesus Christ. We are called to be holy. We are called to be sanctified in what we take in and what we put forth in our lives.

But that's not what qualifies us to pursue the calling. Our qualification is in Christ, not in our own personal holiness. And that distinction is made in the separation of these two ram sacrifices.

He and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. Then look at verse 22. Now we're going to take the parts.

Remember, all of the parts of that first ram were consumed, went up in smoke as a sweet aroma to the Lord. This ram, its parts are going to be applied to Aaron and his sons. The question may arise in your mind, well, why is this only Aaron and his sons and why do we make application to ourselves? Why wasn't it all of Israel? Why didn't they troop all the Israelites one by one and tag them on the earlobe and on the thumb and on the toe? We don't have time to go into it in detail, but you can go and pursue at your own opportunity the representation of the nation of Israel in the sons of Levi, in the Levites.

You remember that there are actually 13 tribes in Israel. You have the tribe of Joseph, which becomes Ephraim and Manasseh, and so you have actually 13 tribes, but there's one tribe that belongs to God, and that's the tribe of Levi. And when you go back and look at the process of redemption, the firstborn son of every family in every clan of every tribe belonged to God and had to be redeemed.

And you can go through, there are numbers there, 22,000 Levites, and there were 22,000 and some change, firstborn sons in Israel, and God said, I will trade you for your firstborn sons in Israel. You're going to give me the Levites, and they are going to redeem your firstborn sons, which stand in, that's the strength and the lifeblood of the family is the firstborn son. That's its future.

That's its leadership and its heritage and its double portion and everything. So you have a series of representations and substitutions. You start out with all the nation of Israel.

Their families are represented by the firstborn sons. The firstborn sons are redeemed by the Levites, but there were more firstborn sons in Israel than there were Levites. There were 22,000 Levites, there were 22,000 and some change, firstborn sons.

And so the remaining 273, I forget the exact number, were redeemed with silver. And there's a whole separate study you can do on redemption by silver as opposed to redemption by blood or redemption life for life. But my point is the Levites, in God's eyes, were the representation of the nation.

The whole nation belonged to God. And He could, by right, He owned the lives of the firstborn, but the Levites were the redemption of the 12 tribes of Israel. And so the tribe of Levi belonged to God, and then you had the 12 tribes.

God, through the double portion, sort of replaced the tribe of Levi in the nation. And that's why sometimes you see 12 and sometimes you see 13. I think that's also why in the end times in Revelation, when you get the list of tribes, you have Ephraim and Manasseh listed, but there's a tribe missing, and you're back to only 12 tribes when you get to the end of the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom and so forth.

And again, we could go so many different ways in looking at these things, but I really want to try to keep our focus on that ram that is caught by its horns in the thicket on Mount Moriah. It's one of the most significant. If we don't remember anything else out of the book of Genesis, including creation, including the fall, including the flood and everything else, in terms of practical application and focus on the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, you can't get anything stronger than this picture on the top of Mount Moriah with Abraham, with Isaac bound on the altar, with the knife stretched forth.

We often think of the upraised knife, but it was a stretched forth knife. It was ready to slice across Isaac's throat to spill his blood, which would then have been human blood used in sacrifice and to fulfill these rituals. But instead, the angel of the Lord speaks and stays Abraham's hand, and Abraham's attention is directed to the ram.

We want to understand what that significance is. We have here in the sanctification of the priests a great picture. This is God's ideal for the entire nation of Israel, but Israel is represented in the Levitical priests.

It would have been great if all of the Israelites could have fulfilled this, but it's a time of shadow. It's a time of symbol and of ritual. The reality can't take place until Christ comes, and the reality will be fulfilled in Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

They're going to get all of the things that are only shadowed in this age. These same Israelites. We think, well, those poor Israelites, they lived in the age of shadows, and they didn't really have the full blessing of the Holy Spirit and union with Christ and so forth.

They're going to get that. These same Israelites that we feel like sort of missed out, they'll get it, but they're not going to be made complete without us. It tells us over in the New Testament.

And we, although we came last, we are getting the first fruits. We're the first to taste of these inherited things. But Israel is going to catch up.

They're going to be resurrected. They're going to have the full blessing of the Holy Spirit. All of Israel is going to enjoy what the priests represented here in this sanctification and dedication and fulfillment of calling.

But because the great picture of reversal is that it has to be based on faith. It has to be rooted in the recognition that we don't have this within ourselves. It has to come from the outside.

The priests couldn't sanctify themselves with their own blood. They couldn't slash themselves like the priests of Baal up on Mount Carmel. It takes an outside source for sanctification.

It takes the ritual that God prescribes to qualify them. And that's the picture. So you have the blood and the sacrifice specifically noted up until you get to verse 22.

Then you take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe of the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh. Then you have the loaf of bread, the cake made with oil and so forth. You put these in the hands of Aaron and the hands of his sons.

You wave them and you receive them back from the hands and burn them on the altar. Then there are other parts, the breast and so forth, that are actually consumed by Aaron and his sons. What is the significance of that? Well, we're going to pause here and take our break.

And when we come back, we'll finish our analysis of the symbolism involved in the ram sacrifice. And then we'll return to Genesis 22 and conclude our study of that wonderful picture that we find on top of Mount Moriah. But let's pause here and take our break.