

Lev 05-07-03b

As we continue our worship this morning, we turn our attention now to our study of the Levitical offerings. And we have covered these in some detail. I think most of us can resurrect from the burial ground of our mind the salient facts about the Ola, the Menka, the Shalomim, the Kata'at, the four major classes of offering.

The first three being sweet savor offerings, the sin offering obviously not a sweet savor, the first three eaten and partaken of by symbolically God and in most cases by the priest and in the case of the peace offering by the offeror. The sin offering on the other hand, a representative portion to show God, to demonstrate to God that this is in fact a holy and acceptable sacrifice gone up in the altar and then the remainder taken outside the camp and burned. We've talked about the idea of restitution.

We've talked about the priestly view, the priestly responsibilities in executing these. We have had this question come up in discussion before and I've heard it come up in other contexts. How well did the people of Israel understand what these sacrifices meant? Did they catch the significance or was it just service to a bloody God who demanded these ritualistic killings of their livestock? Well, I turn for an answer to Idersheim.

He has a great book called *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services* as they were at the time of Christ and I'm going to draw heavily on him for the answer to this question. In his fifth chapter which deals with the sacrifices, their order and meaning, he has a section called *The New Testament View of Sacrifice, Agrees with the Synagogue*. I'd like to quote just a little bit of this for you.

Sometimes I run across information and I can't really add anything to it by reformulating it so I just give it to you as I find it. I've done this with some things I've found in McIntosh and Jukes and Idersheim has a great answer I think that is helpful for us to understand because it reflects and it illuminates our New Testament understanding. He says, It is deeply interesting to know that the New Testament view of sacrifices is entirely in accordance with that of the ancient synagogue.

At the threshold we here meet the principle there is no atonement except by blood. So you first come into the idea of atonement and that blood has to be shed for that. This was understood.

In accordance with this we quote the following from Jewish interpreters. Rashi, now Rashi was a famous rabbi, lived my recollection is right around 1000 AD between 1000 and 1100. My memory tells me that he wrote some significant stuff right around 1050.

But Rashi says on Leviticus 17:11, 17:11 of Leviticus says, For the life of the flesh is in the blood 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. Well Rashi says on that soul of every creature is given to it to atone for the soul of man. That one soul should come and atone for the other.

Similarly Abba Ezra writes one soul is a substitute for the other. And Moses Ben Nachman says I, now listen to this, I gave the soul for you on the altar that the soul of the animal should be an atonement for the soul of the man. These quotations might be almost indefinitely multiplied.

Another phase of scriptural truth appears in such rabbinical statements as that by the imposition of hands. The offerer as it were puts away his sins from himself and transfers them upon the living animal. And as often as anyone sins with his soul whether from hate or malice he puts away his sin from himself and places it upon the head of his sacrifice and it is an atonement for him.

Which sacrifice is in view here? Laying on of hands and the transfer of sin. It's the katahat, the sin offering. By the way I don't remember if I've spelled that for you lately but it's C-H-A-T-A apostrophe A-T.

Katahat. The sin offering. So resuming here with Eidersheim, hence also the principle laid down by Abarbanel that after the prayer of confession connected with the imposition of hands the sins of the children of Israel lay on the sacrifice.

Now this is the sin offering for the nation on the day of atonement. This according to Maimonides explains why everyone who had anything to do with the sacrifice of the red heifer or the goat on the day of atonement or similar offerings was rendered unclean. Since these animals were regarded as actually sin bearing.

In fact according to rabbinical expression the sin bearing animal is on that ground expressly designated as something to be rejected and abominable. Now just this past Friday night at the end of Hebrews chapter 13 what was our exhortation? Christ suffered outside the camp. Let us go and join him outside the camp.

We can't be striving for acceptance by those who consider themselves to be orthodox and are not. Those who consider themselves to be righteous, who consider themselves to have life or good figured out and they expect us to meet their standard of acceptability, their standard of goodness. We can't do that.

The author of Hebrews talking to Hebrews about their challenge which was following in the steps of Christ and in so doing having to break away from traditional Judaism which they had been steeped in and had grown up in and which their relatives expected from them. And the author says, Paul the apostle I think says, you have to be willing to go outside the camp and identify yourself with that offering. Well from a ritual point of view, from an old testament legalistic point of view, you're unclean.

And it's kind of an odd thing for the apostle to say that well you need to go identify yourself with that offering because in the rabbi's view the sin bearing animal is expressly designated as rejected and abominable. So Eidersheim continues, the Christian reader will here be reminded of the scriptural statement for he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might

be made the righteousness of God in him. There is yet one other phase on which the synagogue lays stress.

It is best expressed in the following quotation to which many similar might be added. And this is a quote and this is the best part, this is the main part that I'm driving at here. Properly speaking the blood of the sinner should have been shed and his body burned as those of the sacrifices.

Remember this is a rabbi talking about old testament levitical offerings. Properly speaking the blood of the sinner should have been shed, his body should have been burned as those of the sacrifices. But the holy one blessed be he accepted our sacrifice from us as redemption and atonement.

Behold the full grace which Jehovah blessed be he has shown to man in his compassion and in the fullness of his grace he accepted the soul of the animal instead of his soul that through it there might be an atonement. So is substitutionary atonement understood by the rabbis? Is it understood by the ancient Israelites that this animal's soul is going up instead of my soul? This animal's blood is shed instead of my blood? This animal's body is burned instead of my body? This is clearly understood. The Israelites grasp it, the idea of substitution is well known to them.

So Eidersheim continues, hence also the principle so important as an answer to the question whether the Israelites of old had understood the meaning of sacrifices. He that brought a sacrifice required to come to the knowledge that the sacrifice was his redemption. So should the generation into which Jesus was born and into which he came and began his preaching and teaching ministry, should they have recognized that the Mashiach, the anointed one, had come? What are the words of John the Baptist that announce and inaugurate and introduce the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ? Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

This is the introduction. You know how Ed McMahon used to do for Carson? Here's Johnny. It's an introduction.

And you know who's about to come from behind the curtain because of the words that are said. John the Baptist was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets. It's hard to remember sometimes because he's in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

But John the Baptist is an Old Testament prophet. He's dressed like Elijah. He is carrying an Old Testament message to Old Testament saints and he says, Behold the Lamb of God.

Here's the one that takes away the sin of the world. John had that clearly in mind. And you remember our study when we went through the messengers that John, once he was imprisoned by Herod, and he sends messengers to Jesus and he says, Are you the one that shall come or do we wait for another? And people have traditionally assumed that John sort of faded out once he got imprisoned.

Well, maybe Jesus isn't the Messiah after all. Not at all. The coming one.

Are you the one that shall come? That's future. That's the conquering king. John was well aware that Jesus was the suffering servant.

The Lamb of God who takes away sin. John's question was, Now are you the same one who is going to rule and reign as predicted in Isaiah? Is the same person both the suffering servant and the conquering king? This had been a raging debate in rabbinical circles and theological circles in Israel for decades, for forever. Ever since Isaiah gave his prophecy, people started wondering, Well, now I see the suffering servant.

He's wounded, bruised, and by his stripes we are healed. And we also have this root shoot from the stump of Jesse who's going to rule with a rod of iron and break in pieces of potter's vessels and so on. Well, how can he suffer and die and be cut off, but not for himself, as it says in Daniel, and still rule? Well, the erudite, those who have an ear to hear, those who lift up their voice and apply their heart for understanding, would look at the concept of resurrection as it is expressed in the Levitical offerings, as it is expressed in Leviticus 14, where you have the two doves that are identical.

One is killed and broken open, and his blood is drained into a bowl that's filled with living water. And then the second bird is dipped into that blood and water, blood and water, and set free. What came forth from Jesus' side when he was pierced by the spear of, traditionally, Longinus.

Remember that? They even got a name for the Roman soldier, Longinus, who was married to Elizabeth Taylor, British guy. Richard Burton, wasn't he Longinus? Or was it John Wayne? Somebody played him in one or another of the movies. Yeah, I know what John Wayne did in one, at least.

But blood and water, the identification of the living bird with the dead bird. And you find this also with the goats on the Day of Atonement, and the scapegoat that is released into the wilderness and bears away the sins of the nation. So this was known, this was understood.

And this question should have been answered, and some people did. Simeon understood it. Anna understood it.

Later on, Joseph of Arimathea and eventually Nicodemus understood it. The disciples understood it. When Jesus asks his disciples, whom do you say that I am? And Peter replies, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

You are the Mashiach. You are the Anointed One. Peter recognizes that he is the coming King.

Anointed is anointed for kingship. Anointed is the horn of anointing oil that qualifies a son of David to sit on the throne of David. Peter was introduced to Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

And when he says, you are the Christ, Peter is acknowledging that however limited his understanding may have been, you are the coming One. The Messiah is the coming One. It is the Messiah who will lead Israel in the kingdom.

And Jesus goes on to say, flesh and blood have not revealed this to you. My Father has revealed this to you. Why? Well, the Calvinists would say it is sovereignty.

God just arbitrarily said, well Peter, you get the knowledge. And Andrew, you get the knowledge. I am just going to throw a dart at the map and decide who is going to get the knowledge.

Go back to Proverbs chapter 2 and innumerable other passages. God gives grace to the humble. God gives knowledge.

God gives good things to those who ask. Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find.

Knock and it will be opened. Why did the Father give this knowledge, this recognition of the Lord Jesus to Peter? Because he was asking and seeking and knocking. Why was he down there listening to John the Baptist? Peter and Andrew and James and John were the nucleus and the core.

And they were down there. They were listening to John the Baptist because they were seeking. They were looking for answers.

They weren't up doing something different. Well, because of this, we have the understanding that there is a responsibility on the part of the people of God to know what is happening, to know the times, to know the seasons. Jesus' generation, every generation of Israelites should have known the concept of atonement, the concept of redemption that is expressed in these Levitical offerings that we have studied.

And by implication, by extension, they should have been able to understand the lessons of each of these offerings. The sin offering is one thing. The olah is another.

The offering, the dedication of self that is acceptable, it's not tainted by sin. It's not inedible on the part of the priest. It is not the body that has to be taken outside the camp and incinerated.

This is offered in its entirety to God, except for the skin. All of the different levels of these sacrifices that we have studied and the teaching points that are contained therein, this is the wordless book. This is the teaching tool, the illustrated manual.

In the modern day, we have comic books where the story is told in pictures, or children's books are largely pictures with just a little bit of text, and they learn most of what they come to understand by looking at the pictures. And their parents explain what the pictures mean. You'll notice, I remember there was a book on brushing your teeth when our girls were really little.

It was all about Molly or some little girl learning to brush her teeth. Very few words, but

pictures. She goes in, she gets a toothpaste, she gets the brush, up and down, the whole thing is in pictures.

And the parent explains, well, this was the job of the priests and the Levites, was to elucidate and illuminate these pictures for the nation of Israel. So, this is why the New Testament can say, is the word of God far off? Is it up in heaven where you can't reach it, or down in the pit where you can't attain to it? No, it is near to you. It is in your heart.

It is on your lips. There is no excuse for Israel to fail to see what the word of God reveals, interpretation, application. You and I have been given infinitely more than what they were given in the revealed word of God.

We have 66 books. We have the ability to search on any word. We have the ability to delve into the ancient languages.

There has never been a time in history we understand Hebrew better than the Hebrews understood it who spoke it. We understand Greek better than the original recipients of Paul's letters, because we have the world of Greek literature available to us. We have got computerized concordances and lexicons and cross-references.

We can instantly find how any word was used by any ancient Greek author at the click of a mouse. We have isagogics. We have the fruit of archaeology.

We have at our individual fingertips virtually every shred of information that is worth knowing about the context of the Old Testament and the context of the New Testament. So what is our excuse for having this infinitude of Christian denominations, internecine squabbling and fighting and division? Even within denominations, divisions, a denomination splits and then splits again and then splits again. And we are mocked and we are derided by the outside world because they say, your Bible is incomprehensible.

Your Bible is confusing. Your Bible is vague. It is open to interpretation.

No two people can agree on it. You get two Baptist preachers together. They can't agree on some point of the Word of God.

You get any ten Christians in a room and you can't get all ten of them to agree on anything in the Word of God. It is impossible to know what it says. Therefore, it has no legitimacy.

It is just like any other book. You might as well study the Book of Mormon or some other humanly generated book. Well, whose fault is that? It is our fault.

It is our fault because the Word of God is not of any private interpretation. Men spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. And the reason there is a proliferation of understandings and interpretations is that people are uncareful.

They are incautious. They are sloppy. They are narrow minded.

They go to the Bible looking for a proof of a previously conceived notion rather than letting the Bible dictate the notions. And all you have to do is to get into a discussion with somebody of this ilk who teach as doctrines the traditions of men to see why we have gotten into this mess. And it has been pointed out that because we are corrupt, God gives us something great and perfect and holy and we corrupt it.

God gave Israel the law and in 1400 years they completely corrupted it. By the time Jesus came, the law as interpreted by the Pharisees was a travesty. By the time of Malachi, the sacrificial system was in a state of complete disrepair and abuse.

Read what God says through Malachi in that book. Your sacrifices are a stench in my nostrils, God says. This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me.

And teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. This is what goes on today. This is why it is so important for us to measure ourselves by the standard of the Word of God.

Well, for this reason we have been studying the Levitical offerings because our understanding of these offerings gives us insight into our New Testament life, our New Testament doctrines. Nowhere has this been more clear than in our recent study of the book of Hebrews. We have been studying the Levitical offerings.

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