

# Balga Autumn 2006 – Israel's Feasts in the Light of Christ Today

## Session 5 - Leviticus – The Offerings as a model of Fellowship with God

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### **I - Preamble**

Moses brought back to the people the Law. Idolatry of the golden calf. Ex 24 the blood of the covenant Jeremiah 31. break covenant with a faithful God. God's righteousness saves Israel – He holds covenant when Israel does not. Picture of God as a true and righteous God becomes their salvation. Romans 1 the righteousness of God which saves – the theme of Romans.

Numbers and Leviticus – go through the wilderness and they keep falling over – against Moses, and also against God – the meekness of Moses and then he is challenged about his leadership he is meek. The people follow him because he has the revelation. Is Moses a meek man- he becomes a leader because he has such rich revelation.

For us we have the union and we hear the voice of the leader – and we have a union from the inside out from them it is the outside in. The Law deals with externals - now there is a working out from the inside now and there are externals to be seen.

When God comes off the mountain, and starts to live with the people. He is accessible but unapproachable and so the Jewish spirituality is about being purified and cleansed – implication we are dirty.

[a] the holiness of God is the main theme. They are too dirtied up to go.

[b] if they are to worship, He will have to teach them how to worship; they cannot bring whatever they want [Cain]. This is his provision for them,

Most of the worship is for the people to come to God safely, as a holy God. As we read the terrifying events in Numbers we see God as someone who backs up his man, Moses. Leviticus is saying the average Jew, how will you worship me individually.

The Jewish sacrifices are unlike the pagan mollification, soften him; all sacrifices of the Jews are given by God before they are given to God. Must be a response to the word of God

Sacrifices are not useful of themselves – bulls and goats took away sins. What took away sins was trusting in God's word about the blood of bulls and goats. We read Leviticus as a lot of mumbo jumbo – high detail if not laid out they will be presumptuous. All ancients understand, "if it please the king. There is a protocol and you need to honour his court. These Levitical sacrifices are a most gracious provision for the approach safely. We have become blasé and we just approach and open our mouth -i.e. we are not trembling that the earth doesn't open under us. We are in a safe place.

Coming to look at the material tonight. How wonderful God is and how he loves us to provide for us such a wonderful thing. He is holy you'd better do it right. Tend to trust the priests whose business is to get it right. You know how he wants it done. The mediatorial priesthood was his provision for them – all your life that is how you will spend your life gutting animals, putting on the altar to get it right.

They were serious about this – we can get sick of this. Sometimes because He is so accessible to us we get weary of it – people get familiar and blasé about what Christ has done for us.

### **A - SACRIFICES: THEIR ORDER AND MEANING**

#### **2 - Symbols and Types.**

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbolical and typical. An outward observance without any spiritual meaning is simply a ceremony. [eg. The way you wash the dishes, comforting things, reinforced habits so you don't have to reinvent the wheel]. A rite, having a spiritual meaning is a symbol of something deeper than the external actions presented to the eye. [eg. Handshake] If that rite, not only has a present meaning but also points to a spiritual reality which is anticipated in the future then, by that very hope which it engenders, it conveys the blessing which that future will bring; in that sense it is a type. It points to a situation which one day is going to be better and more real. [eg a girl with a doll, which is symbolic and typical]. God has used this wonderfully with the Jewish people. These things are the presence of the future. [eg. Of the river flowing towards you - we are facing the future which is coming to us in the present]. The present is deeply impressed by my hopes for the future.

This hope has to be centred about a person – not a thing. For the coming of the thing means that there is no more hope – because you have it. Never put your faith for something – always in a person because they may be trusted whether absent or present. Types are a natty way of saying something is happening which has a reference to the future; which is not complete in itself.

For us today there is a consummation of our present relationship with God which will go deeper and maturer. Face to face – a great day and we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. The more we learn of Christ it increases our power to conform to his life.

The sacrifices constitute the centre of the Old Testament. They express what the person feels about himself in his need of propitiation; in just the way that prayer states that dependence we experience towards God.

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Need to know these things or they will be tedious for us unless we understand what these sacrifices mean. He always wanted us so much to approach – how it pleases Him to see us approach through Jesus.

#### **3 - Substitution**

As the firstfruits stand for the whole harvest, the firstlings for the whole flock they represent, the redemption money for that which cannot be offered; so the life of the sacrificed, which was in its blood, stands for the life of the sacrificer. To bring my bull is to bring myself – this bull stands for me.

This idea of substitution, which was instituted by God as a way of his grace towards Israel, is caught up in the word “atonement”. It signifies a covering, where the substitute, as acceptable to God takes the place of, and so covers the person of the offerer. Why is the bull acceptable to God? because it is God's gracious provision in lieu of myself and my mess ups. Sacrifices have a power to release the person who brings them to God in response to his revelation that they may. But they also have the power to remind the Jews of their sins because they must be offered again and again, because we sin again and again.

Why can you speak to God – have you brought Jesus as your offering? No, He is not an offering that you can make, but that God has made for us. How can we be so arrogantly sure that we are OK with God that we will believe Him and so come to Him with such confidence? It is because the principle of substitution on our behalf then presumes the issue of our coming. Christ is not acceptable to God because of Who he is only; but also because of the provision of the way to approach God which is previously revealed. Christ is a true and proper atonement, but not unless in company with the fact that God has instituted the principle of Atonement by substitution in the first place. This is what Leviticus makes clear for us; and why we must read the Old Testament to know the benefits of Christ and exercise our faith in him aright. [Jesus does not drop out of the sky. We cannot separate Him from the previous revelation about Him. What makes Jesus sensible and effectual are these presuppositions which are laid down. Take away the OT presupposition about substitution and Christ is robbed of His salvation work.]

This is what is meant when the Psalmist says, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered... unto whom the Lord does not impute iniquity” [Psalm 32.1-2; 84.9].

#### **4 - Mediatorial priesthood.**

All of these sacrifices had elements and actions the worshipper must do for himself, making clear that he was the person substituted for. And equally, there were elements that only the priests did and could do, and so this signifies that presentation to God was an act that must be done for the worshipper. Both truths at once: I must bring my own offering because it is my sin; and it is also true that it must be offered by the person and in the way that God says it must. You must have a priest to offer it for you; because he is authorised to do this.

Yet these priests were themselves sinners and they, alike with the worshippers, had to be brought near to God and kept in fellowship with Him. And so the priesthood looked for another perfect Mediator whose priesthood was perfect and who on an altar brought a perfect sacrifice, once for all – a perfect Substitute and a perfect Mediator [Hebrews 10.1-24].

#### **5 - The “blood of the covenant”.**

The beginning of the sacrificial revelation that God brought through Moses was the Passover. It took place in Egypt, long before there was an established tabernacle or temple with its altar. This lamb anticipated all the other sacrifices and in their constant renewal the basis of the salvation action of God on behalf of Israel was remembered and re-stated constantly in their annual festivals and fasts. Passover was the first feast and the beginning of the year, and this is what they start with.

Yet there was a sacrifice that took place and required no renewal – it was the time when God entered into covenant with Israel and Israel became the people of God. At that time Moses sprinkled the “blood of the covenant” on the altar and on the people [Exodus 24]. It was on the ground of this covenant sacrifice that all the other sacrifices rested [Psalm 50.5].

All the worship of the Jews is based on this covenant cut with them, and in that respect they promise to obey. Leviticus is secondary to Exodus 24. They are first his people before they worship. They do not become his people by worshipping. So for Christians, they have been brought near by the blood of Jesus and in the name of Jesus – one is on union. I do not draw near to be in relation with God; it is the reverse it is because I am in relation with God that I draw near. [This is a common mistake Christians make. Intercourse before marriage is a mistake – it says that if you do intercourse you have established the union; it is a mistake the establishment of the union is primary to the celebration of the union is secondary. We see this is in the new covenant of my blood. Now through

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the Spirit we express the intimacy. Distinguish the basis for the intimacy from the subsequent worship which is based on the basis – we forget this, so did Israel. Don't put your trust in the worship – obedience is better than sacrifice. To hearken is better than the fat of rams. This is why He has given us the Lord's supper – it takes us back to tores, back to basics.

#### 6 - Sacrifices “in” or “for” communion

All the other sacrifices looked to celebrate the fellowship with God that they had as a people, or they were for the maintenance of that relationship when it was not in harmony. They were either sacrifices of shared communion with God – sacrifices in communion [eg the burnt and peace offerings]; or they were sacrifices intended to restore communion when it was disturbed or dimmed because of transgression – sacrifices for communion with God [eg. the sin and trespass offerings].

Need to be careful here, “I am out of sorts with God, I have sinned and transgressed. I will get my bull. I am in relation with God because of my sacrifice of the bull”. Wrong, I am in relation because of the blood of the covenant in which if he falls over in that context, the bull is for him. [eg of confessing sins to establish relation with God. It happens because these things are in my hands to do; and they are; but they are always a response to God.].

Pre-eminently this happens for us at the Lord's Supper – He eats with us, as Host and Victim.

#### 7 - Requirements for a sacrifice

The should be brought

[1] of the sorts of things God said; [can't bring strange fire]

[2] to be offered in the appropriate place and manner,

[3] through the mediatorial agency which God had appointed.

The most important thing about any sacrifice was that it should be something that belonged to the offerer. None other could represent him or take his place. See David on the buying of the threshing floor of Araunah. [Beware of people who covet you to bring your work to God as under their own aegis.]

All animal sacrifices were to be free of defects and all unbloody sacrifices [meal, cereal or wave] were to be free of leaven or honey. Possibly for fermentation meant corruption of these sacrifices. Both are symbols of sin.

As an extension of that principle salt, as a symbol of incorruption through its power as a preservative, was added to the sacrifices; the salt of the covenant. [See Mark 9.49 “everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt”. The salt was added to the sacrifice to symbolise its incorruption. So our lives will show their permanent reality and value as being salted with fire, when all that is corruptible shall be consumed.

#### 8 - The holy and the less holy sacrifices.

Certain of the meat offerings [Leviticus 2.3,10;6.17; 10.12] and all the burnt, sin, and trespass sacrifices as well as all public peace offerings were most holy. These were;

[a] slain at the north side of the altar [less holy at the eastern or southern side]

[b] either not partaken of at all or only by the officiating priests and within the court of the temple

[c] as to their skins, were wholly burnt, or belonged to the priests [less holy to the offerers]

[d] all brought before sunset, although the unconsumed flesh might smoulder on the altar until dawn.

#### 9 - Laying on of hands

This meant transmission and delegation and so implied inner representation; all of which pointed toward the substitution of the sacrifice for the sacrificer. It was always accompanied by confession of sin and prayer and facing west. The priest would offer it as yours, and you would lay hands to say it is mine. This does not happen for us today. There is a Man who has taken up the sacrifice as Priest and Offering for us.

The only public sacrifices in which hands were laid on were those to do with sins of public ignorance [Leviticus 4.15; 16.21]. The elders acted as representatives for the people. On the Day of Atonement it was the priest who laid his hands on the scapegoat.

The lifting up of hands, as in a wave offering was often accompanied by the priest putting his hands under those of the offerer and moving the sacrifice up and down, and then right and left.

What if God brings an offering? Not to be set right with Himself; Jesus is an offering on our behalf as Victim and Priest. He is God's provision for us, but we don't bring Him, God does bring Him on our behalf, and we receive what He has offered for us. Reconciliation on the basis of the provision

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that God has provided for us all – “once for all”. Distinction between the principle of sacrifice and the efficacy of sacrifice. Why couldn't we have laid our hands on Christ as our sacrifice? The reason why we couldn't have offered our Christ because we did not know His worth until He was offered. But now that God has offered Him will we receive it – back to the issue of hearing the word of God about Jesus.

Laying on of hands goes to the Old Testament understanding but does not go to NT practice.

#### **10 - The death of a sacrifice is different from the application of the blood**

The death of a sacrifice was only a means to an end; which was the sprinkling of blood by which atonement was made. With different sacrifices the application of the blood was made differently and in different places. [The blood is for God and not for us - He finds it useful because He has separated it as on the altar as for the souls. We learn from God that blood is what He has designated as important to Him on the matter of the covering of sins.]

[a] In the burnt, trespass, and peace offerings the blood was thrown directly out of the vessels in which it had been caught. The priest went to one corner of the altar and threw the blood so that two sides of the altar received it. Then to the opposite corner and did the same so that all four sides received the blood. Any excess was poured out at the base of the altar and flowed into the brook Kidron.

[b] In all sin offerings the blood was not thrown but sprinkled, the priest dipping his right forefinger into the blood and sprinkling it from his finger by a motion of the thumb. The blood was applied to the four horns of the altar of burnt offering, or else it was brought into the Holy Place itself, and sprinkled first seven times towards the Veil of the Most Holy Place, and then on the four horns of the altar beginning at the north-east.

[c] On the Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled within the Holy Place itself

#### **11 - The cutting up of the sacrifice into pieces, salted and burnt.**

Done in an orderly manner, the apostle Paul adopting a sacrificial term when he speaks of “rightly dividing” the word of truth [2 Timothy 2.15]. The innards and legs were washed and dried with sponges and then the division of the pieces as appropriate was carried out. Next the salt was applied, then the pieces randomly thrown on the fire and then arranged within the fire in an appropriate way.

The burning had a particular meaning. Some say that it pointed to its destruction and spoke of the wrath of God and the punishment of sin but the term used for burning means to “cause to smoke” and the rite symbolises the entire surrender of the sacrifice, and chiefly its acceptance on the part of God. So the sacrifice which the fire of God burnt up ascended for a “sweet savour to the Lord” [Leviticus 1.9,4.31]. This is born out by the fact that the fire for the altar of incense was taken from the altar of the burnt offering; while the fire symbolises the presence of God in his house, it could not symbolise the fire of wrath and punishment.

That whatever was laid upon the altar was sanctified by it and could not be removed, even though it might have become defiled. This explains the words of the Lord in Matt 23.19.

### **B- THE OFFERINGS**

#### **12- The burnt offering**

Olah, the Hebrew word means ascending to God. Symbolised the entire surrender to God and his acceptance of the person or of the community. If other sacrifices were brought this one followed the sin offering and preceded the peace offering. It was always a male animal, indicating strength and energy. It was the only offering that a non Israelite was permitted to bring.

The whole thing is offered and nothing is kept. The offering is wholly for God; “sweet smelling savour to God”. This thrills God because all is being given to Him.

#### **13 - The sin offering**

Most important of all the sacrifices it made atonement for the person of the offender [propitiation] whereas the trespass offering made atonement for the one special offence. [Propitiate a person [I am a sinner and not right] and you expiate a crime [trespass offering] with emphasis on the deed. Consistent with this a sin offering [general redemption] was brought on festive occasions for the whole people, but never a trespass offering [ransom for a special wrong]

Both sacrifices were applied to sins done “through ignorance”. That is through want of knowledge, or unintentionally, or through weakness, or where the offender at the time did not realise his guilt. All this is contrary to those done with a high hand for which there was no atonement. These

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offerings do not allow us to play fast and loose with God. Cannot presume on God. This is the distinction as to when the earth opens under people - it is rebellion with a high hand. The sin offering had a retrospective effect on the worshippers; the trespass offering was a satisfaction concerning a definite matter.

In all cases it was vital that these two offerings were accompanied with repentance, whether private or public. There was nothing joyful about these offerings; they were simply necessary and God in his grace had provided a way forward when sin had been done.

The sin offering differed according to the public position of the person involved. For example:

[a] the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement or when he had sinned he drew the guilt unto the people for he represented them. If the whole congregation had sinned, or at the consecration of priests then a whole bullock was brought. People with authority within the people of God it is much more significant, not because the sin is different but because the person is representative of the whole. Responsible people can draw a more significant offering.

[b] offering of the kid of goats for the people on the day of Atonement

[c] female kid of goats for individual Israelites or ewe lamb for Nazirite or leper.

[d] turtle doves or young pigeons offered for certain purifications.

Also, the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled not thrown about.

The smaller offerings are not just due to poverty, but to my place in the community. If I am a little player then that is recognised; I don't represent anyone.

#### **14 - The trespass offering**

This offering concerned the transgressions committed through ignorance, or else, when a man voluntarily confessed himself guilty.

#### **15 - The Peace offering**

The most joyful offering it was an offering of completion, always following all other sacrifices. It signified a season of happy fellowship with the covenant God, in which He condescended to become Israel's Guest at the sacrificial meal as He was also the Host. In peace offerings the sacrificial meal was the point of main importance [Rev 3.20]. The peace offerings were either public or private. The two lambs offered every year at Pentecost were a peace offering, and the only one regarded as most holy. This is an offering in communion with God, not for communion.

#### **C - SUMMARY**

We forget we are in relation to God as a gift and nothing we do has anything with establishing the relationship with God. May have much to do with maintenance of that relation. Proud people make this mistake. Confuse the initiative of God to have relation with the maintenance of God for that relation.

That we can kiss and make up has nothing to do with the kissing and making up – it has to do with the basis on which we are set in the first place. Good fellowship of God's people there are good things that can be done there – the foundation is right then the fellowship can bring change and healing to terribly wrong situations.

1. That God wanted fellowship with his people and yet he knew their situation . They could never arrange it – He must do it. The wonderful husbandry of God .
2. That what he provides they were rigidly astute to follow. They couldn't make a change arbitrarily.

It is rigid because God's provision is for Him alone to say – not for us.

3. Each person must be aware of their own guilt; I have done wrong. It is concerned with deeds. [Shame is awareness that I am not whole]

Jesus is effective because of who he is, but he dies it in the OT framework which allows us to recognise what He is doing.

Cannot use Christ's cross mechanically – it works because of Who He is. Or it is not effectual for what He does in His person through it.