

IX. Sacred Acts: Christ Our Perfect Sacrifice

July 30, 2017

Chapter 10

Purpose: To see the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Key Verses: ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with **the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot** (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Longman: The sacrificial system in Israel during the Old Testament time was wide-ranging and complex. It certainly exerted a significant financial burden on the people. God showed grace, to be sure, in allowing different types of sacrifice, depending on one's economic status, but even a bird cost money! Further the time burden would have been great, especially for those who did not live in Jerusalem. After all, it was only at the altar in Jerusalem that sacrifices could legitimately be offered.... The wonderful news of the New Testament is that Jesus has fulfilled the sacrificial ritual by His own death and resurrection. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, which all the animal sacrifices simply anticipated (p. 103).

A. Jesus, Our Sacrifice

Longman: The New Testament often connects Jesus' death to Old Testament sacrifice in general terms without using words that specifically identify a type of sacrifice. Even so, it is especially the atonement nature of Old Testament sacrifice that is at issue here. With that in mind, we may especially see the *'olah* as at least implicitly in the background of New Testament writers. However, ... the *'olah*, *minhah*, and *shelamim* were normally offered at the same time, and so the whole complex may serve as the backdrop of Jesus' sacrifice (p. 104).

Poythress: The differences between the types of sacrifices are largely a matter of degree, and so we must be careful not to distinguish the types too sharply. In particular, the sin offering and the burnt offering serve quite similar purposes. But the different types do seem to emphasize different aspects in the process of communion with God. The sin offering and guilt offering emphasize punishment or retribution for sin. The burnt offering emphasizes consecration to God, which includes utter destruction of sin and uncleanness. The grain offering emphasizes payment of what is due in thanksgiving to God. Fellowship offerings emphasize enjoyment of God's presences and blessing. ... All these aspects are combined fully in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christ bore the punishment for our sins (1 Pe. 2:24; Is. 53:5). Thus He is the final sin offering. Christ was wholly consecrated to God. He suffered death and destruction for sin, and also brings about our death to sin (Rom. 6:2-7). Thus He is the final burnt offering. Christ in His perfect obedience gave to God the honor and thanks that are due to Him. Thus He is the final grain offering. Christ now offers us His flesh to eat (Jn. 6:54-58). By partaking of His flesh and blood we have eternal life, we have communion with the Father, and we are transformed into Christ's image (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus Christ is the final fellowship offering (p. 49).

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1. Jesus' Blood and Sacrifice

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a **propitiation by his blood**, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:23-26).

Longman: Here Paul specifically connects Jesus' blood to the idea of sacrifice. This association, of course, makes immediate sense against the background of the Old Testament. The blood of the animal, symbolic of its death when shed, represented the death of the sinner who identified with it through the ritual of laying his hands on its head. This connection was purely symbolic, but here in Romans 3:25 we learn that Christ's blood is the ultimate sacrifice that removes us from God's anger for our sins. We are declared righteous because of our union with Christ. It is important to note that God the Father sent Jesus to perform this act, which removed His anger from us. There is a longstanding debate over whether Jesus' death does away with the wrath of God (propitiation) or simply removes sin (expiation). Romans 3:25 is at the heart of this discussion.... We must fully embrace the idea that God (and Jesus, who is of course God) hates our sin, and, though the Father provides the means, Christ's sacrifice does away with that wrath (p. 105).

2. Jesus the Spotless Lamb

¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with **the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot** (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Longman: Our salvation was not paid for by mere money, but rather by Christ's life, which is here described in clearly sacrificial language. He is a lamb without blemish, whose blood, representing His death, earns our redemption. The mention of a spotless animal can be connected to a variety of Old Testament sacrifices, for instance, the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:5), the 'olah sacrifice (Lev. 1:10), a *shelamim* sacrifice (Lev. 3:6), a *hattat* sacrifice, and so on. The effectiveness of the image does not depend on an exact identification with a particular sacrifice.... What is implicit in the characterization of Jesus as without defect? He is, as a human being, without sin. The "sinless" one voluntarily sacrifices Himself on our behalf (p. 106).

3. Jesus' Sacrifice as Sweet Perfume

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, **a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God** (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Longman: Paul here states that Christ is a sacrifice who died in order to remove our sins.... What is new is the description of that sacrifice as "sweet perfume" to God. This phrase reminds us that the 'olah offering provided "an aroma pleasing to the LORD" (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). Indeed, the Septuagint translation of the phrase in Leviticus is identical to Paul's words in Ephesians 5:2 (*osmē euōdias*). Paul reminds the Ephesians of the sacrificial nature of Christ's death in order to prod them on to sacrificial behavior themselves (pp. 106-107).

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4. Jesus' Sacrifice as God's Expression of Love

¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²**He is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2).

⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and **sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins** (1 John 4:9-10).

Longman: In both places, Jesus is called a sacrifice (*hilasmos*) for our sins.... We have already seen a word related to sacrifice (*hilasmos*) above in Romans 3:25. It is ... specifically, “a sacrifice to placate someone who is angry.”... “Sins are covered over and God’s righteous anger is changed” by means of this sacrifice. Both of these passages in John describe the basis on which Christians enjoy a relationship with God after that relationship has been broken by sin (pp. 107-108).

5. Jesus, the High Priest

¹For **every high priest** chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he **is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins** just as he does for those of the people. ⁴And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was (Hebrews 5:1-4).

²⁶For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷**He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.** ²⁸For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever (Hebrews 7:26-28).

Longman: Hebrews 5 presents the Old Testament situation where even the high priest, the most set-apart of all human beings, needed to offer sacrifices to atone for his own sins. He, after all, was a sinner himself, and since he drew near to God with the sacrifices and gifts of others, his sins needed to be atoned for as well by means of a sacrifice. Jesus is a priest of a different order. He is not only the priest but also the perfect sacrifice. He offered this sacrifice of Himself for others, not for Himself. After all, He is sinless. As the perfect sacrifice, He had to offer Himself only once (p. 109).

6. Sacrifice and Tabernacle: Shadows of Jesus and Heavenly Reality

²³Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴**For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages **to put away sin by the**

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sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him (Hebrews 9:23-28).

Longman: The unnamed author of Hebrews recognizes that the Old Testament system of sacrifices was an earthly shadow of heaven realities. The shadow was a physical tent (the tabernacle) where animals were sacrificed and their blood was manipulated. However, the reality is heavenly, and therefore animal sacrifice simply won't do. It was fine as a symbol, but the reality has to be something much more substantial. And that something more substantial is someone, namely Jesus Christ.... The contrast in Hebrews between the inadequate shadows of animal sacrifices and the effective reality of Christ's sacrifice continues in 10:1-18. It wasn't that the animal sacrifices failed in their divinely appointed functions: they were instituted after all to be symbols and not the reality. Now that the reality is here, there is absolutely no need for any more animal sacrifices (p. 110).

B. Jesus, Our Sin and Guilt Offering

1. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God.** ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

Longman: In the context of the 2 Corinthians passage, Paul urges his audience to be reconciled to God. The basis of this reconciliation is Christ's death. He is the purification offering that removes our sin. He is the sinless sin offering that allows reconciliation to take place (p. 111).

2. Hebrews 13:10-14

¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹**For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.** ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come (Hebrews 13:10-14).

Longman: The Hebrews passage is part of the book's concluding emphasis on the benefits of our relationship with Christ. Here, it is specifically the sin offering on the Day of Atonement that is meant. The interesting link with Christ's death has to do with the general requirement that the remains of any sin offering be burned outside the city. So the author of Hebrews points out that Jesus was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem. He is our sin offering, our Day of Atonement offering. He makes the impure pure again. Not only this, but His death outside the walls of the city also beckons His followers to go outside. Outside the camp is unclean territory, but Christ, having made them holy tells them to move out. Most commentators argue that the camp represents the security of Judaism, but now they are to move out into the world for Christ (pp. 111-112).

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C. Jesus, Our Passover Sacrifice

¹The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵**Your lamb shall be without blemish**, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. ⁷Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn” (Exodus 12:1-10).

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.** ⁸Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Longman: While the [Passover] sacrifice bore some characteristics in common with the Levitical sacrifices, ... it was unique, and Paul uses this sacrifice in particular to describe Christ's death on the cross. But Paul is not picking this imagery out of thin air. Indeed, though not stating in so many words, the timing of Christ's crucifixion and indeed the whole structure of His earthly ministry point to the truth that He is the fulfillment of the Exodus; He is the Passover Lamb (p. 113).

Longman: The gospel of Mark (1:2-3) begins with a quotation from Isaiah 40:3 referring to a voice calling in the wilderness. In effect, the opening of the gospel announces that some connection exists between the historical Exodus and Jesus' ministry. A brief survey of this rich comparison begins with the baptism of Jesus, which parallels the Red Sea crossing. Paul called the Red Sea crossing the baptism of the Israelites (1 Cor. 10:1-5). It was the beginning of their redemption, just as Jesus' baptism initiates His ministry (pp. 113-114).

Longman: After the crossing of the sea, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus, remarkably, goes into the wilderness for forty days and nights, where He is tempted by Satan (Mt. 4:1-11)... Jesus' temptations are the same as those that the Israelites experienced in their wanderings. Jesus is tempted in regard to food; the Israelites complained heartily about their lack and quality of food. Jesus resists the temptation to test God; the Israelites were constantly testing God. Jesus rejects Satan's invitation to worship a false god; the Israelites caved in easily to the worship of a golden calf (p. 114).

Longman: These examples are just the beginning of the Exodus echoes we find in Jesus. During the wilderness wandering Moses went up on Mount Sinai and received the law of God. It is more than a coincidence that in the gospel of Matthew (chapters 5-7) Jesus also goes up a

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mountain, where He delivers a sermon on the law. Jesus is showing Himself to be the divine lawgiver (p. 114).

Longman: Jesus is crucified during the Passover (Jn. 19:17-37); He becomes our Passover Lamb. What is the Passover but the Jewish festival that celebrates the Exodus? The relationship is undeniable. The Gospels insist that we understand Jesus as the fulfillment of the Exodus and His death as the ultimate Passover sacrifice (p. 114).

Longman: The above survey has no pretensions of being complete. However, the point is well established by this sampling of passages. Jesus is our sacrifice! He is the one anticipated by the symbolic system of Old Testament ritual. With His once-and-for-all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to have any other sacrifice of any kind (p. 115).

D. Selected Questions for Further Reflection

1. Read and reflect on the sacrificial language of Isaiah 53. How does it relate to Leviticus, and how does it anticipate the New Testament?
2. Read Genesis 22, the story of Abraham taking Isaac to Mount Moriah. Do you note any parallels with Christ's later sacrifice? What do you make of these parallels?
3. Sacrificial language in the New Testament is also used in connection to our response to our new life in Christ. Read Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:17; 4:18; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5 and consider implications for our lives.

Next Week: Read Longman chapters 11 & 12