

Old Testament Shadows of Redemption – 1: The Shadow of Sacrifice

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today we return to the study of O.T. shadows of the redemption that help us understand the redemption that has come to the world through Jesus the Christ and His saving work in this world.
2. Last month we considered the shadow presented in the salvation of Noah and how it relates to our salvation by grace through faith in Christ.
3. Today I want us to consider a most significant shadow that made its mark throughout the generations of the Jews and that weighs heavily on our understanding of the work of Christ—the sacrifices!
4. This shadow is so prevalent both in the O.T. Law and life of the Jew, as well as in the N.T., that one cannot fully grasp the import and power of Christ's work without first appreciating these sacrifices.
5. So, today I want to consider the shadows presented in the O.T. sacrificial lamb and the Levitical sacrificial offerings, as well as their substance, their reality, found in Jesus!

BODY:

I. The Shadow of the Sacrificial Lamb:

- A. From the beginning God desired the offering of a blood sacrifice (Gen. 4:1-5 – “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.”² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering,⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.”).
1. Abel was a “keeper of **sheep**” (4:2) and it is significant that he “brought of the **firstborn** of his flock” (4:4), seeing that God respected his sacrifice.
2. The N.T. sheds some light on this (Heb. 11:4 – “By faith Abel offered to God **a more excellent sacrifice** than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was **righteous**, God **testifying of his gifts**; and through it he being dead still speaks.”).
- a. Faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17), while righteousness come through doing what God says (1 John 3:7 – “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”).
- b. This would indicate that a *blood sacrifice* in the form of a *firstborn* of the sheep was what God had instructed from the beginning, indicating the serious price of sin and redemption and presenting a shadow of the coming redemption provided for sin by God Himself.
- B. This shadow becomes clearer in offering of the Passover Lamb (Ex. 12):
1. All households of Israel were to take to themselves a male *lamb without blemish* for the Passover (12:3,5).
- a. Being a *lamb of the first year* meant it was in the prime of life.
- b. Its *physical perfection* presented the costly nature of their salvation from Egypt bondage.
2. The lamb's blood was to be put on the doorposts and lintel of the houses within which they would partake of this lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (12:6-8, 11).
3. Although this sacrifice had no altar, the lamb's *lifeblood was offered* to God that those *within the house might be saved* from death that God was bringing upon Egypt (12:12-13, 22-23).
- a. It is important that there is no reference to priests or that it was later limited to the priest.
- b. This was a sacrifice that all Israel was to do, shedding this lamb's blood by their own hands and resulting in deliverance from God's wrath!
4. It was to be observed as a *memorial*, along with the feast of unleavened brethren, throughout their generations that they might be continually reminded of God's salvation in redeeming them from bondage by the blood of a lamb (12:14).

II. The Levitical sacrifices:

- A. We find sin offerings were provided for sin committed *unintentionally*—that is the wording.
 - a. *Unintentional* sins included those committed due to lack of knowledge, maybe those through weakness in one who knows but falls to temptation, or where the offender knows the law but did not know he/she had violated the law (i.e., like us missing a road sign).
 - b. There was no sacrificial provision for *intentional* or *presumptuous* sins, which are those committed in defiant rebellion to God. For, these would result in one being “cut off from among the people,” which generally meant death (Num. 15:30).
 - c. I mention this because we should never choose to defy God’s will and do what we know is forbidden (Heb. 10:26-27 – “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”)!
- B. The sacrificial offerings for sin:
 1. If the high priest/whole congregation sinned, an **unblemished bull** was required and its **blood** sprinkled by the **High priest** on the incense altar before the veil **inside the tabernacle** and the rest poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offerings outside (Lev. 4:1-3,7,11-12).
 - a. This was an extremely costly sacrifice whose fat was burned on altar of burnt offerings.
 - b. The **remainder** of this sacrifice’s meat *was not eaten by the priest*, but taken *outside the camp* and burnt on the spot where its ashes of this sacrifice were poured out.
 - c. This would symbolize the repulsive nature of sin and the people’s salvation being their separation from it.
 2. Leaders and Israelites required an **unblemished goat/lamb** whose blood was sprinkled by a **priest** on the **altar of burnt offerings** and blood poured out at its base (Lev. 4:22-23, 27-32).
 - a. Again, the costly nature of sin is expressed in the perfect nature of this female goat or lamb of sacrifice required by God.
 - b. The fat was burned on the altar and remainder eaten by the priest (cite Lev. 6:24-30).
 3. There were **trespass** offerings given by God to **purify** those guilty of certain sins (i.e., failing to testify what one knows, touching an unclean thing, swearing thoughtlessly, lying, failing to keep one’s commitment).
 - a. These sins required the offering of a **lamb/kid or a ram without blemish**, or two turtle doves/pigeons if one could not afford the other (Lev. 5-6).
 - b. These were killed and their blood put on the *side* of the altar of burnt offerings.
 - c. The rest of their blood was poured out at the base of the altar.
- C. Although there are more we could mention (burnt/peace/daily), the purpose of these sacrifices was: “So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.”
 1. We take this statement of atonement and forgiveness in stride because we are so far distanced from these sacrifices and their horror. But have you considered the cost or done the math?
 2. If you take how many Israelites there were and apply these sacrificial requirements to each accountable adult, the results are staggering.
 - a. When leaving Egypt (1446 BC) Exodus 12:37 says there were 600,000 men on foot (able soldiers) not counting women and children (or the aged, unable to fight, etc.).
 - b. Conservative estimates allow for 2.5 million Israelites in the exodus.
 - c. Passover – 600,000 households x 1330 yrs. (i.e., 1446 B.C. to the time of Christ’s ministry minus 176 yrs. for captivity, wickedness, rounding down to even number) = 798,000,000 lambs sacrificed!
 - d. If only 1.2 million Jews offered one sacrifice a year (there were additional animal sacrifices) for 1300 years (this is not allowing for population growth and special occasions of sacrifice like the dedication of the temple), some **1,560,000,000** animals without blemish would have been offered and their blood poured out on the altar for sin!

- D. Are you beginning to grasp the magnitude of the sacrificial shadow?
1. The sheer number of innocent animals killed and the volume of blood that flowed through Israel as a nation is staggering!
 - a. Yet, this was only the **beginning costs** of God's wonderful grace bestowed upon His sinful and undeserving people that they might be forgiven and saved!
 - b. God knew that these animals' lives and blood were only a **shadow** and not the substance of what was required to truly forgive!
 2. This should open our eyes as to what the Jew grasp in the gospel!
 - a. Consider the impact of the following (Hebrews 10:1-4 – "For the law, having a **shadow** of the good things to come, and **not the very image** of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.").
 - b. The whole system with its blood-stained priests offering hundreds of millions, even billions, of sacrifices were only a shadow, a faint image of what was needed for their ultimate forgiveness and salvation???
 - c. But, in the heart of the faithful Jew they knew this statement to be true, that there was something missing in this sacrificial system, that they had never felt truly clean and the burden of sin fully lifted from their conscience!
 - d. Something had to be added, to be provided by God, to give eternal value to the law's shadowy sacrifices!

CONCLUSION:

1. I want to turn your attention to John 1:29 where it is revealed, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**"
 - A. Do you get the amazing import of this very short statement?
 - B. Jesus's perfect sacrifice, the giving of his sinless life and body on the cross, is the focus and fulfillment of those millions, even billions, of sacrifices.
 - C. For, through His work accomplished what those sacrifices with all their blood could not! He brought true forgiveness of sin to the Jew and Gentile alike!
2. No more shadows, no more futile shedding of the blood of hundreds of millions, even billions, animals that could not remove the stain of sin.
3. If you will come to Jesus in faith, accepting Him as your Lord and Savior, and repenting of your sins, and confessing your faith in Christ as the risen Lord, you can be buried with Christ in baptism where His saving blood, shed in His death, will be applied to your soul, and be raised to walk in newness of life and of hope for the eternal salvation of your soul!
4. The question is what will Christ be to you—shadow (thought) or substance (faith/obedience)?