

See Jesus Giving His All

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Bible Text: Ezekiel 43:18-27; Hebrews 13:10-14

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Ezekiel chapter 43 and verses 18 and following. As I read a text like this some will say, "Well, what is going to come out of this text?" And perhaps that will be your thought, but I think you will see the message emerge.

Ezekiel chapter 43 and verse 18, continuing on a with a vision that God gives Ezekiel.

And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'These are the statutes for the altar on the day it is built, to offer burnt offerings on it and to sprinkle blood on it. You shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me,' declares the Lord GOD, 'a young bull for a sin offering. You shall take some of its blood and put it on its four horns and on the four corners of the ledge and on the border round about; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. You shall also take the bull for the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place of the house, outside the sanctuary. On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering, and they shall cleanse the altar as they cleansed it with the bull. When you have finished cleansing it, you shall present a young bull without blemish and a ram without blemish from the flock. You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them, and they shall offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD. For seven days you shall prepare daily a goat for a sin offering; also a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be prepared. For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it; so shall they consecrate it. When they have completed the days, it shall be that on the eighth day and onward, the priests shall offer your burnt offerings on the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you,' declares the Lord GOD."¹

Let's pray.

Father, again, we are grateful for your grace. We thank you that you love us and that you have prepared a perfect sacrifice for us in Jesus Christ. And we thank you that all of

¹ Ezekiel 43:18-27

these Old Testament sacrifices point, inevitably to Jesus Christ who is the Savior. And so we pray this morning, Father, as we take time to look into this particular passage of Scripture, this vision given to Ezekiel, that you would be pleased to show us Jesus Christ that we might see him. Bless us to this end we ask in his good name. Amen.

Introduction

When you come into this place of worship you undoubtedly notice, first of all, the centrality of the pulpit. This pulpit stands at the center of our activity and what we do as a congregation. And then if you come up a little bit closer to the front of the auditorium you see the communion table below the pulpit and also the baptismal font. The sacraments are represented plainly before us. These are principal means of grace, the Word of God and the sacraments.

If you go into another church you might find a different setting, a setting in which an altar is at the center of attention. In some cases this is an altar upon which is portrayed for the congregants a reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ. And this altar becomes the center and the focus of all that goes on in the congregation. Along with that altar there the clergy wear vestments of various sorts. And there are incense and candles. All of these things are actually reminiscent of the Old Testament.

Unfortunately, when we bring in these Old Testament accoutrements, these Old Testament ways of worship into the New Testament Church, we fail to recognize that this altar and this incense, and those other things that are given to us in the Old Testament, point to Jesus Christ. And when we look at the Old Testament sacrifices, when you look at the Old Testament sacrifices, you are to see Christ. And in the text that is before you this morning you are to see Jesus Christ giving his all to cover your sins and to give you fellowship with God.

That is the point I want you to get from this text this morning, that, indeed, Jesus Christ does give his all to cover your sins and to give you fellowship and peace with God.

And so as we look at this text I am going to be pointing you to Christ and I want you to see Christ in this way.

1. The Priests cleanse the altar of burnt offering with sin offerings (Ezekiel 43:19-21).

As we come to our text we are in the midst of a vision again, a vision that God gives to Ezekiel. And we are not looking at the altar particularly, but the sacrifices that take place on the altar. But a word about the altar might be in order.

This is quite a large altar. It is 16 cubits square at the bottom and on the second tier it is 14 cubits square and on the top it is 12 cubits square. Translating that into feet since this in the Scriptures is given to us as a large cubit, the standard cubit and a hand width, it is 32 feet square at the bottom and 28 feet square on the second tier and 24 square feet on

the third tier where the sacrifice is offered. And it is 10 cubits high which means it is 20 feet high. It is huge. It is two stories high and very large.

And as you look at the text, this helps us to understand what is going on in this particular text. Look with me now at verses 19, 20 and 21. The altar is to be consecrated. It is to be set aside for its use in this vision.

You shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me,' declares the Lord GOD, 'a young bull for a sin offering. You shall take some of its blood and put it on its four horns and on the four corners of the ledge and on the border round about; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. You shall also take the bull for the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place of the house, outside the sanctuary.²

This bull is to be slaughtered and its blood taken and on the top of the altar, at the very top there are horns like the horns of an animal on each corner of the altar and blood is to be spattered on the horns of the altar and on each of the decks around the altar as you go down. Blood is to be spattered.

And on the top of the altar is offered the entrails, the fatty portions of the bull. And then the bull itself, the rest of the bull as it says in verse 21, "You shall also take the bull for the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place of the house, outside the sanctuary."³

And this is to point to Christ who is ultimately the sin offering and who is crucified outside of the camp, outside of the city. This is an offering for sin that points to Jesus Christ.

2. This portrayal of Christ takes its symbols from the sacrifices of the past (Leviticus 4).

The details are given in Leviticus chapter four. And I would like you to turn back there to Leviticus chapter four to pick up some of the details of this sin offering in Leviticus chapter four.

Here in Leviticus the various offerings before the Lord are rehearsed for us and for the children of Israel. Leviticus 4:1.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them, if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to

² Ezekiel 43:19-21

³ Ezekiel 43:21

the LORD a bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.”⁴

If the people had committed a sin unintentionally, that is, they had committed a sin which did not become obvious to them immediately... Have you ever done such a thing? You have committed something wrong; you have committed an error before the Lord; you have sinned before the Lord. And it is not until later that God gives you conviction and you see from the reading of the Scriptures, that yes, you have violated the Word of God. That is what it means, that it doesn't come to you immediately. It is an unintentional sin as it is committed, but you discover it later.

And then the children of Israel were to bring an offering, verse four. “He shall bring the bull to the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull and slay the bull before the LORD.”⁵

The animal was to be brought into the tent of meeting, into the tabernacle, and later into the temple, and then the hands of the worshipper were laid upon the head of the bull. You would hope someone was restraining the animal, wouldn't you? And that was to symbolize the transfer of sin from the individual to the animal, to the sacrifice.

“Then the anointed priest,”⁶ verse five.

... is to take some of the blood of the bull and bring it to the tent of meeting, and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary.⁷

Here is the sin offering now as it was normally given. The blood was brought into the sanctuary itself. And you remember, you should remember the construction of the sanctuary. It faced east. And first you had the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant was located. And then a veil was separating the holy place from the holy of holies. And there was another little altar, an altar of incense in front of the veil. And then in the holy place was also the table of show bread. It would be on your right as you entered the holy place and the candelabra on your left. The priest would go into the holy place and sprinkle the blood of the bull on that veil and before that veil the Scriptures tell us.

Verse seven. “The priest shall also put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense which is before the LORD in the tent of meeting; and all the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the doorway of the tent of meeting.”⁸

⁴ Leviticus 4:1-3

⁵ Leviticus 4:4

⁶ Leviticus 4:5

⁷ Leviticus 4:5-6

⁸ Leviticus 4:7

And so the blood would be put on that altar of incense and then the priest would go out of the holy place and in front of the holy place was the altar of burnt offering and there he would pour the rest of the blood. This is a big animal and there was a lot of blood and you probably wouldn't have wanted to be there because of the scene. The blood was poured out in front of the altar.

And then all the fatty portions were burned. Look at verse eight.

He shall remove from it all the fat of the bull of the sin offering: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which is on the entrails, and the two kidneys.⁹

The kidneys were very flammable and so they were burned. "...two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys."¹⁰

And verse 10, the latter part of verse 10. "And the priest is to offer them up in smoke on the altar of burnt offering."¹¹ So all the innards, the guts—that's a good way to put it, isn't it—the guts of the animal were placed on the altar.

But what about the rest of the animal? Verse 11.

But the hide of the bull and all its flesh with its head and its legs and its entrails and its refuse, that is, all the rest of the bull, he is to bring out to a clean place outside the camp where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned.¹²

You see, there was apparently a place where the ashes from the sacrifices were taken. These weren't ordinary ashes because these were the ashes of the bulls and the calves that were burned on the altar and the ashes were taken out to a place outside the camp because they were special. And then what happens? The rest of the bull is burned outside the camp again. See, the sin offering outside the camp.

3. This sin offering points to the future and to Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:10-12).

Ok, with those details turn to the book of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 13 verses 10 and following. You see, all of these things that were done in the Old Testament economy, all of these things that had to do with the sacrifices, pointed to the Savior, to Jesus Christ who is the ultimate sin offering.

⁹ Leviticus 4:8-9

¹⁰ Leviticus 4:9

¹¹ Leviticus 4:10

¹² Leviticus 4:11-12

Hebrews chapter 13. “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.”¹³ We have an altar, Christian, we have an altar.

Verse 11. “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin...”¹⁴ You see, as we just discussed in Leviticus chapter four, the blood which is brought into the holy place and spattered on the veil and on the altar of incense...

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the camp.¹⁵

It wasn't in the temple that Jesus suffered. It was outside, on Golgotha, the place of the skull, outside the camp where that ultimate sin offering was given in the body of the Savior.

Verse 12 again. “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people...”¹⁶ That's you and me, that he might sanctify us, set us aside for the purposes of God. “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the camp.”¹⁷

And then the writer to the Hebrews says, “So let us to go out to him.” Let us to go out to Jesus. “Let us go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For we do not have a lasting city here, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”¹⁸

For we do not have, friends, a lasting city here. Oh, yes, we want our houses. We want our automobiles. We want our church buildings. We want our cities, but, friends, ultimately these are not things that will last. Is that not the case? They are not things that will go on forever and ever. No. We are looking for something that is greater. We are looking for a city that will last.

And where are we going to find that city, that place, that rest with God? Outside the camp. With Jesus Christ we must go out to that sacrifice, that sin offering and go out to him and embrace him.

And so, friends, you see, these Old Testament sacrifices point to Christ and this is just one example.

¹³ Hebrews 13:10

¹⁴ Hebrews 13:11

¹⁵ Hebrews 13:11-12

¹⁶ Hebrews 13:12

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Hebrews 13:13-14

4. The sin offering proceeds for seven days accompanied by burnt offerings and salt (Ezekiel 43:22, 25-26 plus 23-24).

Now if you would, please, go back to Ezekiel chapter 43. The cleansing of this altar is to go on for seven days. Verse 22 says. “On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering, and they shall cleanse the altar as they cleansed it with the bull.”¹⁹

And it appears from the text that it could be that it is both a bull and a goat that are offered as sin offerings each day. Look at verses 25 and following.

For seven days you shall prepare daily a goat for a sin offering; also a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be prepared. For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it; so shall they consecrate it.²⁰

For seven days. That number seven is significant. That number seven refers to completeness and perfection. And sanctification is to be completed and perfection is to come through the sin offering seven days. And, of course, would it not be that there is perfect cleansing from sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who is, as we have seen, the ultimate sin offering?

And then with these sin offerings—as you will notice in verse 25—there are additional offerings. “For seven days you shall prepare daily a goat for a sin offering; also a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be prepared.”²¹

Additional offerings are to be given. And this is where verses 23 and 24 come into play.

When you have finished cleansing it, you shall present a young bull without blemish and a ram without blemish from the flock. You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them, and they shall offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD.²²

Not only sin offerings, but whole burnt offerings are to be given on this altar.

And these whole burnt offerings are offerings in which the whole animal is burned before the Lord except the hide, except the skin. The animal is to be skinned. And then all of the meat and all of the innards are to be burned on the altar.

And this, again, is a picture of Jesus Christ, of Jesus Christ who gives his all as an atonement for sin. The skin is given to the priest and it represents the righteousness of Christ with which the priest may be clothed.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 43:22

²⁰ Ezekiel 43:25-26

²¹ Ezekiel 43:25

²² Ezekiel 43:23-24

Do you remember? You do remember in Genesis, do you not, how God himself took the skins of an animal and dressed Adam and Eve, a representation of His righteousness, a righteousness that comes from God.

And so this burnt offering represents Jesus Christ and his righteousness. And for seven days, again, these burnt offerings are to go up before the Lord.

And the text also tells us something else, verse 24. “You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them.”²³ The salt is the salt of the covenant. That is how it is portrayed in other passages. It is the salt of the covenant.

You know right well when you have that good beef steak on the grill a little salt on that beef steak helps it out, doesn’t it? It brings out the flavor. It brings out the flavor so that you can savor that steak. And there is a flavor and a savor that comes out when the salt of the covenant is placed upon the sacrifice. Salt is also a preservative indicating that God’s covenant is forever and ever. And the salt of the covenant on the sacrifice indicates that we have the opportunity to savor the good things of God in his covenant through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

5. On the eighth day and following are the daily burnt offerings, morning and evening, and the peace offerings (Ezekiel 43:18 & 27).

And then after seven days of this consecration of the altar in the vision we have an eighth day. Look at verse 27. “When they have completed the days, it shall be that on the eighth day and onward, the priests shall offer your burnt offerings on the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you,” declares the Lord GOD.”²⁴

The eighth day. Now think about that for a moment. What would the eighth day be? The seventh day would be the Saturday, the Sabbath. The eighth day would be the first day of the week. And that is the idea.

In the Bible the eighth day takes on some significance. The first day of the week in the sacrificial system, the eighth day, was the day of first fruits, the day when the first fruits of the harvest should be brought to the tabernacle. And Paul tells us that Christ in his resurrection is the first fruits of the harvest. The eighth day points to Christ.

Pentecost was on an eighth day, the pouring out of the Spirit. And so it is from the eighth day forward that the burnt offerings are to be given to the Lord morning and evening, continually.

And then the text also references the peace offerings. The peace offerings are significant also because in the offering of these peace offerings the burnt offering is already on the altar. Day by day, morning and evening the whole burnt offering is placed on the altar.

²³ Ezekiel 43:24

²⁴ Ezekiel 43:27

And the directions for the peace offering are quite specific. The peace offering is to be placed upon, on top of, the burnt offering.

What is this all about? Well, look at verse 26. “For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it; so shall they consecrate it.”²⁵ There is atonement which is taking place. And the word “atonement” here means propitiation. That is how it is brought into the New Testament. A sacrifice which is a propitiation is a sacrifice that takes upon itself the wrath of God for sin. It propitiates that wrath; it satisfies wrath. It takes upon itself the wrath of God for sin. And this is what the burnt offerings did. They provided atonement. The burnt offerings took the awful wrath of God for sin. They were completely, completely consumed. And this was the atonement. And the peace offerings were placed upon, on top of those atoning sacrifices.

John says Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins.²⁶ He is the burnt offering.

And the apostle Paul says, “Having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁷ On the basis of Jesus Christ, on the foundation of Jesus Christ we have peace with God.

And so the peace offerings, symbolically, were placed upon those burnt offerings, those whole burnt offerings. And you see, my friends, they all point to Christ. And in these offerings you are to see Jesus Christ taking the wrath of God for your sins and giving you peace with God.

6. See Jesus Christ giving His all to cover your sins & give you peace with God.

Think about that. See Jesus Christ is the ultimate sin offering. See Jesus Christ the sin offering as he goes to Gethsemane. He throws himself on the ground in a sweat, with bloody sweat covering his body. He cries out to the Father, “Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me,”²⁸ He is looking, he is looking, as Jonathan Edwards says, “into the blast furnace of the wrath of God” and he sees that which he is about to encounter. He trembles in horror at the thought of it. Not just that he is going to suffer physically, but that he is going to encounter the wrath of God on behalf of sinners, sinners like us.

He is the ultimate sacrifice for sin. And see Jesus Christ, the ultimate burnt offering who gives himself wholly, fully for your sins. See him on the cross as darkness descends and he cries out “Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”²⁹ Because he is suffering the brunt of the wrath of God and the mercy of God seems far, far off. See him as the ultimate burnt offering, whole burnt offering that takes away your sins in atonement.

²⁵ Ezekiel 43:26

²⁶ See 1 John 2:2

²⁷ Romans 5:1

²⁸ See Matthew 26:39

²⁹ Mark 15:34

And see in Jesus Christ the ultimate peace offering and look at him there on the cross again. And that thief, that one thief next to him who says to him, after he has heard his companion blaspheme the Savior, he turns to the Savior and says, “Remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”³⁰ And Jesus turns to him and says, “This day you shall be with me in paradise.”³¹ See Jesus Christ, the ultimate sin offering and burnt offering and peace offering.

And when you come to worship you don’t need an altar here. You don’t need an altar. You need Christ. You need Christ. And when you come to worship what you need is the gospel of Christ and the gospel that comes through Jesus Christ and you need to see Jesus Christ who gave his all to cover your sins and to give you peace with God.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you, thank you for your gospel. Thank you for Jesus Christ. May we see him. By your grace may we see him as the one who gives his all to cover our sins and to give us peace, peace with you. Bless us your people here assembled. To this end we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

³⁰ Luke 23:42

³¹ See Luke 23:43