

Hidden In Plain Sight: Ancient Sacrifices

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I remember the first time

Years ago

That I set out to read thru the entire bible in a year

I think it was around New Years, right?

So, I started reading

Like you do any book

At the beginning

And I read through Genesis

There's a lot of great stories in there

And then I got to Exodus

With Moses and the Pharaohs

That was pretty cool too

And then I got... to Leviticus

Oh, Leviticus

The wheels began to come off

In Leviticus

And then Numbers finished me off

Whatever I had left

I'm not sure I even got to Deuteronomy

That first time

Anybody else ever do that?

OK

So, I want to help you with that today

A few weeks ago

Starting on Easter Sunday

We started a series called

Hidden in Plain Sight

The idea of the series

Is that Jesus has always been there

Long before He died on a cross

Long before He was born in a manger

He was there

He's here now

He's Hidden in Plain Sight

Scholars call it – Typology

We had such a positive response

If you don't know what I'm talking about, those messages are online or on our app

But we had such a positive response

That I thought I'd drop a few of these in

Over the next couple of months

Now – why does typology matter?

If you're a follower of Jesus

It matters because it fills in some gaps

Helps us see a fuller perspective of the Scriptures

We'll begin to accurately see Jesus

All over the Old Testament

So that's great

But if you're not yet a follower of Jesus

It's even more important for you guys

How is it that this One Guy

Who never owned a business

Never lead a country

Never commanded a military

Never received a single academic degree

How is it that this One Guy

Is so prominent?

Dr. Robert B. Price – “The New Testament does not add a brand new Christian spin to the Old Testament. It does not merely apply Old Testament passages to Jesus that could just as well been applied to anyone else.”

The reality is

That God arranged ancient Jewish history

Knowing that Jesus was coming

God arranged ancient Jewish history

With Jesus in mind

And if He's not God

We've got another burden of proof

To explain how that works

We already have a tall order to explain life without God:

Why is the universe designed intelligently and precisely for life

If there's no God

Why is there a consistent framework of morality – across time & cultures

If there's no God

Why is Jesus the dominant figure in all of history

If *He's* not God

And now

Now I'm adding another

Why was Jesus alluded to – and prophesied about

All over the Hebrew Scriptures

The Scriptures the Jewish people still believe

If He's just a guy

Also – if you're a Christian

I'm going to try to help you

Get thru Leviticus the next time you try to read through the Bible

So, there's that

Go ahead and get out a Bible

Turn to Leviticus 1

The words every Church goes wants to hear

Open up to the book of Leviticus

Page 68 in these Bibles

So, Moses prophesied, in Deuteronomy 18:

Deuteronomy 18:15a - The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites.

He's talking about Jesus

Way back in Deuteronomy

Peter later quotes this passage

And tells the crowd that Moses *was indeed talking* about Jesus

Acts 3:21-22a - Heaven must receive Him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people.'

God used Moses

To be a shadow of Jesus who was yet to come

So that when the Jewish people first saw Jesus

They would recognize Him

As the Messiah

That means we can see Jesus

In the Law of Moses

The writer of Hebrews gets more specific:

Hebrews 10:1 (NLT) - The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The *sacrifices* under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship.

The Levitical Law

With all of its sacrifices

And proscriptions

Was like a shadow of Jesus

It gave them hints – clues

That made Him easier to see when He arrived

And those clues are still there for us

Hidden in Plain Sight

Verse 3:

Hebrews 10:3-4 (NLT) - But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The sacrifices of bulls and goats

Were merely shadows of the sacrifice of Jesus

That means looking at those more closely

Can help us understand Jesus better

That's where we're going today

Jesus is hidden in plain sight

Inside the ancient sacrifices themselves

So, there were 6 separate Levitical sacrifices

You see a summary of those in Leviticus 7:37

Read Leviticus 7:37

The ordination offering was a special offering just to ordain the priests

So, we're not going to cover that today

And, for time sake, I'm going to combine the sin & guilt offering

Because they were very, very similar

So we'll talk about four today

First, we have the Burnt Offering

Read Leviticus 1:1-3

The sacrifice had to be **Without Blemish {B}**

All of the sacrifices require this

You'll see this standard again and again

This didn't mean *the person* was without blemish

Just the *sacrifice* was without blemish

It was representative

And it paved the way for Jesus

1 Peter 1:18-19 - For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb *without blemish or defect*.

You & I don't have to be without blemish

Because Jesus was

And we're in church

So, people overlook this sometimes

But Peter saying that Jesus was without blemish

Peter – who lived with Jesus for 3 years as young adults

Said He was without blemish

Think about this honestly

Would any of your college roommates

Any of them?

Say that *you* were without blemish?

That's what people who knew Jesus best

Thought of Him

At the entrance {B}

Read Leviticus 1:3

So in the tabernacle

You had the most holy place

Where only the priest could enter

But you also had this courtyard area

Where regular folks could meet with God

But to get into the courtyard area

There was only one entrance

And you had to offer a sacrifice *at* that entrance

Let me say that another way

You could not enter into the presence of God

Without going through the gate

And that screams Jesus

John 10:9 (NLT) - Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.

This is a direct reference to the Levitical offerings

They could not come into the tabernacle

We cannot come into the presence of God
Without going through the gate
Without the sacrifice that Christ offered
Without Jesus' sacrifice, we're still in our sins
And we cannot come into the presence of God with our sins

But notice a key difference

When the Levites brought a lamb through the gate
What happened?

The lamb died
They were slaughtered

But Jesus says in Him

They will come and go freely
They will (*metaphorically*) find good pasture

He's making a clear distinction

He as the perfect lamb
Has paid the way *forever* for the sheep

Now sheep can come and go through the gate

I think that's cool

I know I maybe the only one

But I'm ok with that

There's also a **Pleasing Aroma {B}**

Read Leviticus 1:13b

Does this seem off to anybody else?

I know what you're thinking

This is a trick

I shouldn't think anything in the Bible is off when I'm in church

But it seems off to me

They're slitting throats

And splashing blood

And slaughtering animals

That doesn't fit the image of

"pleasing aroma" from v. 13

But catch this - the priests were there at the tabernacle

The whole Israelite community bringing sacrifices *to them*

Even with big families

If each family brought only one sacrifice a year

That's still hundreds of sacrifices a day

So, they constantly had a fire going

And they were constantly throwing meat up on the fire

The tabernacle smelled like a steak house

It was like Martins BBQ

It had a pleasing aroma

Now – how in the world

Is this foreshadowing Jesus

Revelation 19:6-7 (NLT) - Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder: “Praise the Lord! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to Him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and His bride has prepared herself.

At the end of time

When Jesus makes everything right

There’s going to be a feast to celebrate

It says “His Bride” has prepared herself

Who’s that?

That’s us

Jesus is inviting us to a feast

The first official thing followers of Jesus will do in Heaven

Is feast

And I guar-own-tee you there’ll be a pleasing aroma there that day

Now we get into the Grain offering

Read Leviticus 2:1-3

So again – you have this picture of the finest of ingredients

That keeps reminding us of Jesus

Ephesians 5:25b-27 says,

Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

But notice what it says happens

You bring the finest of flour

Along with oil & incense

You burn a little bit of the oil & grain

And all of the incense

Do you see that?

So first of all – what's that smell like?

That smells good

We had steak on the grill earlier

Now we've got biscuits in the oven

That's a pleasing aroma

But most of the flour and oil are given to the priests

This is how they were provided for

They received portions off several of the animal sacrifices

And most of these grain offerings

It also is to be without yeast

Unleavened bread

What's that about?

Yeast is sometimes a metaphor for sin in the Bible

So unleavened represents without sin

Jesus – as our offering - was without sin

But there's actually a little bit more

What does yeast do in bread?

It puffs it up

It makes it appear bigger than it is

Which makes it really tasty... in bread

But really problematic spiritually

Paul uses that analogy in his letter to the Corinthian Church

1 Corinthians 8:1b - Knowledge puffs up while love builds up.

Jesus – although He possessed all power and all knowledge

Was the humblest person to ever live

I saw one person define humility as “flattened out”

Jesus was comfortable in His own skin

He didn't need to try to impress anyone

Or pretend to be something He wasn't

He was... flattened out

And then notice in verse 2 it says

The part you offer is the **"memorial portion"**

Do you see that?

A memorial is to remember

We celebrate Memorial Day this weekend

As a memorial of those who have served and fallen in the military

But what else does that remind you of?

Communion – the last supper

Jesus took bread

And said this is My Body

Do this in remembrance of me

A memorial

And hundreds of years earlier

God – who knows how this story ends

God sets up a memorial

Using bread

That's cool

One other cool thing

So, the grain offering involved flour, oil, and frankincense

When we think of frankincense in the Bible

What do we normally think of?

The wise men, right?

They brought gold, frankincense and myrrh

And where did they bring it?

O little town of... Bethlehem

They brought it to Bethlehem

The name Bethlehem is from a Hebrew word

Do you know what it means?

Wait for it...

Bethlehem means "The House of bread"

I'm telling you

God's playing chess while we're all playing checkers

Alright, next we have the **Fellowship offering**

Read Leviticus 3:1

And also, for this one, read a little more context in Leviticus 7:15

Read Leviticus 7:15

OK – this one’s a little different

In that the person bringing this offering

Eats a portion of the offering

Some gets burned up on the altar

It’s a pleasing aroma

Some is given to the priests

To provide food for them

And the rest is eaten by the people bringing it

But it has to *all* be eaten that night

You can read that later

It has to *all* be eaten that night

What’s that about?

The fellowship offering

Requires that they spend some time in... fellowship

The church potluck was God’s idea

What you’re getting

Is the picture of the tabernacle as being the center of life

It smelled like fresh bread and juicy steak

It had people hanging out eating big meals

All in worship to God
That may not be how some of you grew up
Envisioning church
Let God give you a new picture of church
Let God give you a new picture of Him

OK – let's get to the guilt & sin offerings

The first offerings
Were gifts to God
Like – you're in a relationship with God
And this is just a way of saying thanks

But the guilt offering and the sin offering
Were different
They were given by someone
Who had lost fellowship with God
Or who never had it
And who wanted it back
Who wanted forgiveness

And because of that
There was a provision in this one
For people in poverty

You could give a bull or lamb or goat

But it says, in chapter 5 verse 7

Read Leviticus 5:7

This is the same provision for poverty

Listed later in Leviticus 12 for when a woman gives birth

She's to bring a young lamb

Or if she can't afford it, 2 small pigeons

And in Luke 2 we read about Mary and Joseph bringing baby Jesus to the temple with

Two small pigeons

But there's also a provision if they can't even afford the pigeons

Read Leviticus 5:11

So, it's like the grain offering

Because that's cheaper still

But it says no oil / No incense {G/S}

Why?

Because it's a sin offering

If there's no incense

It won't smell sweet

And if there's no oil

It's probably going to burn in the pan

So, it's bitter... and burned

Because of sin

And that goes right along

With the next item

Lay Hands {G/S}

This is a key thing

And it's the same for all of the sacrifices

Read Leviticus 4:1-2

And then it gives examples

Read Leviticus 4:3-4

I think I assumed the priest did all of the killing

That you'd bring an animal to the tabernacle

Or to the temple after it

And the priest would kill it and offer it as a sacrifice to God

But that's not true

The priests were... kind of like meat cutters

Kroger would hire them in the deli

Leviticus specifies how to dice up all of the cuts

But they didn't kill the animal

The person did

Because it was their sin

So, you'd raise this animal

It often became like a pet

Because they would separate it at birth as a lamb without blemish

And they would take it to the priest

Who would inspect it

And then they would lay their hands on it

Some suggest that they would lean on the animal

And they would kill it

God wanted them to have a right sized view of their sin

Because sin was so destructive

And in the Gospel of Matthew

God gives all of us a right sized view of our sin

Matthew 26:49-50 - And immediately Judas went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then they came and *laid hands* on Jesus and arrested Him.

We downplay sin

/ downplay sin

But I believe God wants to right-size it

In our minds

Lastly – and this is cool

The body for the sin offering

This is unique from the others
The body for the sin offering

Must be Taken Out of the Camp

Read Leviticus 16:27

So, here's the deal

For the other offerings

Burnt, grain, fellowship

The animal is sacrificed right there

But for the sin offering

God wants them to see the corrosive nature of sin

So, for the sin offering

The blood comes into the tabernacle

To pay for their sin

But their body is taken out of the camp

So how does that pave the way for Jesus?

Hebrews 13:11-12 - The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood.

So, on the cross

His body is killed

Destroyed

Outside the city

Because He's carrying all of our sin

He's carrying the sin of the whole world

It's corrosive

So, its outside the city

But Jesus' blood

Is brought into the Holy Place... *metaphorically*

Matthew 27:50-51a - And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His Spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Our sin was so corrosive

That Jesus' sinless body

Had to be taken out of the city

Taken out of the camp

And destroyed

So that His blood could be brought in

And open up the curtain

That separates us from God

If you've never allowed His blood

To pay for your corrosive sin...

Conclusion

God is more trustworthy than we think

Sin is more damaging than we think

Church is more holistic than we think

Jesus is more (just more) than we think