

Jesus and the Tabernacle

Leviticus 24

There is one crucial idea that is absolutely essential for understanding the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. It is a simple idea, that there is one covenant of grace, “wherein,” as our Confession puts it, “[God] freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ.”

One covenant of grace. Not an old covenant that failed and was therefore abrogated such that another entirely new covenant could begin. Plan B, so to speak. No. The Old Covenant and the New Covenant, as they are called in Scripture, “are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same.”

The difference is how those covenants are administered. How they are shown forth in the daily lives of God’s people. In the old covenant, there were external, ceremonial regulations. Lots of them. We’ve been studying them in this book of Leviticus. And they all for-signify Christ to come. They all point us to Christ.

So that when Christ comes, in what is called the New Covenant, we understand his life and his work much more clearly if we see all that he did as the fulfillment of those ceremonial regulations. To put it simply, you are to learn about the person and work of Jesus Christ through the study of Leviticus. That connection is made so clearly in,

Heb. 9:1 “Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; 3 and behind the second veil, the part of the

tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, 4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. 7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance; 8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience-- 10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. 11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

With that connection between the Old Covenant regulations and our life today in the church, let me begin with an obvious principle from Leviticus that is grossly neglected in our society today, and as well within the church.

I. HONOR AND JUSTICE.

The principle is that God’s name is to be honored. God’s reputation is to be exalted! God’s glory is to be promoted. At all cost. And our honor? Our reputation? Our glory?

Those we must lay aside, especially in worship. Worship is ALL about the glory of God's own name. We, therefore, must worship him with a certain frame of mind. Worship requires,

A. Reverence and honor before God.

Heb.12:28 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire."

So worship is not casual. It is not informal. What we do in worship is not a matter of our own tastes and desires. It is about God. Therefore our attitude is one of deep reverence.

Surely that principle is shown forth in Leviticus 24.
v.10-16

Now why is that here? Some commentators suggest simply a chronological connection. This event happened right after God gave Moses the commands in verses 1-9, so Moses records it here. But why even record it?

I could ask the same question this way. Why announce matters of church discipline today? And for the most severe matters of excommunication, why make those declarations a part of corporate worship Why? So that the due reverence and honor of God's name be shown forth among the people of God.

This case in Leviticus was one of blasphemy. The son born to an Israelite woman and an Egyptian father, used God's name in a curse, according to verse 11. So they brought him to Moses and put him in custody.

Dear ones, this is a serious offense. For God's name is his

whole identity, it is the representation of his whole being. God's name summarizes everything there is to know about God. And therefore even his name was to be uttered only when speaking of him with honor. Not flippantly or casually. And certainly not in cursing!

Moses didn't even write God's name in this text, verse 11. He just wrote that the man blasphemed "the name and cursed." The meaning is obvious!

Think about it, though. How much we have accustomed to hearing God's name taken in vain. In curses! I won't even repeat the words for you, but those four letter words that never used to be spoken in polite conversation are used all the time. Beginning with God's name, and invoking his condemnation and damnation of sinners unto hell.

And what is it that people utter when they are surprised? What words come out of people's mouths when catastrophe strikes? People used God's name, but not in an honorable petition. They used God's name simply to express an astonished and horrified amazement.

In the Old Covenant, it was a capital offense!
v.14-16

I'm not suggesting that we enforce that civil penalty for blasphemy, but I do suggest you learn from this how important a matter it is!

And all the more when we worship. This must be a heart issue. It must be the overriding burden of your soul, that everything you do in worship be done with such reverence that the name of God would be honored.

Then there is the matter of the man who killed.

v.17-21

Here is presented to us,

B. The holiness and justice of God.

And dear ones, this understanding of God must be in your minds as you offer your sacrifices of worship. God is holy. And his holiness makes necessary the exercise of his justice!

Let me go a couple steps farther. Consider your own sins. And consider what they have earned for you, in terms of God's holiness and justice. "The wages of sin is death." This death sentence could justly be applied to any of us, for we are all guilty sinners. And we would all be justly condemned to hell were it not for Jesus.

So think about it. This sentence of death, this condemnation for sin, is what Jesus endured on your behalf. And so when you consider the holiness and justice of God as you worship him, it shouldn't cause you to have dread and terror. It ought not to keep you from him, for Scripture tells us that we have a boldness of access to enter God's presence. All because of Jesus, our high priest who sacrificed his own life for us. We read that,

Is. 53:3 "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

We read in Leviticus of the unrelenting justice of a holy God.

v.20

Who of us can stand under such a holy judgment? None. Absolutely none of us. And that is what drives you to Jesus, and through faith in Jesus, you then to enter the presence of this holy and just God with reverence and awe.

Heb.4:14 "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Let me go back to Leviticus 24, and in particular,

v.5-7

Again the question, what is there in that for us? And my answer, "Oh, much in every way."

Consider that Old Testament Tabernacle. There was in the Outer Court, in the Holy Place, the table of showbread. This was NOT behind the curtain of the Holy of Holies, but just inside the temple. On this table were to be placed twelve loafs of bread. Twelve cakes. Each with 2/10 of an ephaph. Now we don't know exactly how much that is, but one estimate I read was that it amounted to about 3-1/2 pounds per loaf! These were huge cakes!

Twelve of them, an obvious reference to the fullness of the twelve tribes of Israel. All of God's people are to be fed with this bread. This was the show-bread. The bread of presence,

meaning that the bread was fit for the honor of being presented to the king. It was set before God.

Beloved, please see this analogy, and this type. The bread of presence, the bread worthy to be presented in worship to God, the bread symbolizing the never-failing source of spiritual sustenance and refreshment for the people of God, is JESUS!

Jesus himself makes that clear in the New Covenant explanations of these Old Covenant symbols. For he tells us that he is,

II. THE BREAD OF LIFE.

In the shadows of the old covenant, this golden table which held the twelve loafs as well showed forth the bread of life.

It was,

A. The bread of God's presence.

That is to say, it is the symbol of God's presence with his people which would sustain their lives, just as our food, our bread, sustains our physical life.

For the New Covenant explanation of that,

John 6:31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." 35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

And John 6:47 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes

in Me has everlasting life. 48 "I am the bread of life. 49 "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 "This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

So it is that we, as priests, eat that showbread in the spiritual realities of the new covenant just as the old covenant priests ate it literally. And John 6 goes on in language that we can apply to the spiritual meaning behind the communion of the Lord's supper,

John 6:53 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."

Dear friends, please see Jesus pictured on this table of showbread, and eat the bread yourselves, hear and now, as you, by faith, trust in him to be that bread of life.

And recognize as well the glories of this great covenant of grace. Remember, the one covenant of grace established by God immediately after the fall in Genesis 3. The covenant in which he "freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ."

The sabbath worship of the priest in the old covenant, in which he would partake of the showbread himself, was a sign of that great covenant.

v.8-9

So it is the covenant meal.

B. The bread of the covenant.

The tangible evidence of God's covenant promise to be our God and to make us to be his people. That's what the showbread did in Leviticus.

That's what we do today, every sabbath day when we gather for worship. The bread of presence is here. That is to say, Jesus is here. In his word. And I, ministering in his name, present him to you! Thus it is my duty, in proclaiming the word to you, to present Jesus to you, his covenant people.

1 Cor. 2:2 "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Finally, from Leviticus 24, we see,

III. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Jesus, of course, used that great image of himself as well. "I am the bread of life." And also,

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

That identification of the light is a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, too.

Is. 9:2 "The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined...[That great prophesy continues...] 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice

From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

So what do we read in Leviticus about this light?

v.1-3

Don't miss this! In the Old Testament, before the incarnation, still we see,

A. The burning of the light.

We see it clearly in Old Covenant worship. Olive oil used to burn in the lamp. So when God's people gather for worship, the light shines! For us, that means the word of God, doesn't it?

Ps. 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."

That's why we read the word so much in worship! Throughout the service, that's when the light of the world shines most brightly. And I don't believe it is inappropriate to see in the oil supplying the lamp the work of the Holy Spirit. Without that oil in the literal lamp, the light, of course, would go out.

So it is of the Holy Spirit today, for though the word is the light of the world, unless the Holy Spirit gives people eyes able to see, they will remain blind to that light.

So it is even with you as Christians. It is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture, it is the Holy Spirit which takes the word read and preached and pricks the inner sanctuary of your own heart. It is the Holy Spirit that enables you to understand, and convicts you of your sin.

So we read in,

1 John 2:27 "But the anointing which you have received from

Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”

And also,

John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

So that light is shining tonight, isn't it? Not a candlestick with a flame fed by olive oil. Not those outward symbols. But the very thing they represented is here among us. The light of God's word is burning brightly. And the Holy Spirit keeps the flame lit continually.

And one more thing about,

B. The golden lampstand.

v.4

This golden candlestick had seven lamps at the end of the seven branches, and surely that is a type of the New Testament church of Jesus Christ. Turn with me to,

Rev. 1:20 “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

So with the image of Leviticus 24, with the one great golden lampstand holding up seven lights, if those individual lights altogether represent the fullness of the church, then the lampstand itself would again come to show forth Jesus himself. And Jesus will sustain and uphold his church throughout this age.

The light of this lamp shall continue to shine, for the church herself is to be the light of the world! And as we worship God today with reverence and awe, that golden lampstand continues to shine. In a very dark and unbelieving world. The light of truth. The light of life.

It is my privilege, and my delight, to preach that word to you, to shine forth that light of the Word. It is my prayer that that light will shine clearly and brightly.