

Worship, Sacrifice, and Daily Living

- I. Primeval and Patriarchal Worship can be seen as a paradigm for worship in the remainder of the Old Testament (Wenham, 102)**
- A. Although the text does not explain it, a probable reason for God's rejection of Cain's offering in Genesis 4 is the quality of the sacrifice.
 - 1. Cain brought forth some of his produce.
 - 2. Abel brought forth the "firstlings" of his flock.
 - B. After the flood Noah offers up a burnt offering to God (Gen 8:21)
 - 1. Noah's offering was a "pleasing aroma" to God, which is a cultic term.
 - 2. God did not make his covenant until *after* Noah's offering, which indicates that his offering was not merely a gift, but an atoning sacrifice for humanity.
 - C. Genesis 22 is the longest account of sacrifice in Genesis
 - 1. At God's command, Abraham goes to a divinely appointed place to offer up his only beloved son, Isaac.
 - 2. God stops Abraham at the last moment and provides a ram in his place.
 - 3. God reinforces the promise of blessing, posterity, and blessing to the nations with an oath because Abraham "obeyed his voice" (Gen 22:18).
 - D. People typically built altars as a response to God's appearance. (Gen 12:7; 26:25; 35:7)
 - E. Some principles emerge from Genesis concerning sacrifices.
 - 1. Sacrifices must be valuable or without blemish.
 - a. Abel's sacrifice came from the firstlings of his flock.
 - b. Noah sacrificed the clean, not unclean animals.
 - c. Abraham was going to sacrifice his beloved son.
 - 2. A sacrifice by a righteous person alters God's attitude toward the unrighteous.
 - a. Noah sacrificed a burnt offering then God promised never again to destroy the earth by water.
 - b. At Abraham's sacrifice, God reinforces his covenant which included the whole earth with an oath.
 - 3. These principles are evident in the theology of sacrifices throughout the rest of the Old Testament as will be seen.
- II. Worship and the Cult**
- A. The purpose of the cult was to mediate the presence of Yahweh (Brueggemann 650).
 - B. One aspect of cultic mediation between God and his people involved the service of the tabernacle/temple.
 - 1. The purpose of the tabernacle was so that the Lord could "dwell among" his people (Ex 25:8).
 - 2. God instructs Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern he would give him. (Ex 25:9). God commanded the finest materials and art work to be employed, which is analogous to having a royal visitor in which everything must be perfect and beautiful (Brueggemann 664).

3. The "glory" of the Lord filled the tabernacle, which was visible as a cloud by day and fire by night. (Ex 40:34-38).
4. The "name" of the Lord dwells in his tabernacle as well (Dt 12:5).
5. Exodus 25:22 - God said he would meet with his people above the mercy seat in the tabernacle.
6. God's dwelling needed to be a "holy" place in order for God to dwell there.
 - a. The closer one moved to the "presence" of God, the more holy the place became, which is why the inner sanctuary is "most holy" (Ex 26:33).
 - b. This meant that the priests had to "atone" for all the items and utensils in God's service including the priests themselves. (Ex 30:26-31).
7. However, God is not confined to a place. (1 Kng 8:5-40)
 - a. Solomon affirms that God is not confined to a place.
 - b. The purpose of the temple is so God's people can pray "toward" it.
- C. The Priesthood was another aspect of mediation between the people and God.
 1. Priests were necessary part of tabernacle/temple worship because they were to officiate at the altar (Anderson 113).
 2. The Priests role was to supervise the physical acts of worship (Breuggemann 664).

III. Sacrifices and offerings occupied a major part of cultic worship.

- A. Primary types of offerings
 1. Burnt Offering (Lev 1)
 2. Grain Offering (Lev 2)
 3. Peace Offering (Lev 3)
 4. Sin Offering (Lev 4-5)
 5. Guilt Offering (Lev 5-6)
- B. Theories as to the meaning of sacrifices
 1. Symbolic (Dan, 613)
 - a. The offerings were to be domestic animals without defect. (Lev 1:2-3)
 - b. The pure, domestic, gentle animal were to signify that the worshipper was coming to worship with a pure heart.
 2. The sacrifice of edible items signifies a "feeding" of God (Eichrodt, 142)
 - a. This concept was common in Ancient Near Eastern Religions
 - b. There appears to be some allusion to this in Lev 3:11 where the offering to God is burned "for food"
 - c. However, Psalm 50:10 clearly rejects the idea that Yahweh needs food.
 3. Gift (Averbeck, 998)
 - a. In the ancient world, expression of feelings needed a concrete form. Therefore, sacrifices were employed as expression to a deity (Eichrodt, 145)
 - b. Vow *Neder* - Hannah vowed (*neder*) to bring her son as a gift to dedicate to God's service if he would give her a son. (1 Sam 1:11)
 - c. *First Fruits* - The first of the harvest to be brought to the sanctuary (Ex. 34:26)

- d. Offering *qorban*- This appears overwhelmingly in Leviticus as a word for the sacrifices, therefore most of the sacrifices could be seen as gifts. (Averbeck, 998)
- e. No one was to appear before God empty handed (Ex. 23. 15).
- f. Thanksgiving was also considered an offering and contrasted with physical offerings (Psalm 50:14)
- 4. Communion (Eichrodt 154)
 - a. This involves a type of fellowship with God
 - b. The peace offering, (Lev 3; 7:11-36) which falls under this category, emphasizes the joy of fellowship (Carpenter, 268)
- 5. Atonement (Eichrodt 158)
 - a. There is some discussion over whether the idea of atonement involves propitiation or expiation (Anderson, 121)
 - 1. There seems to be an indication that "atonement" has to do with appeasement in Numbers 16:41-50, when Aaron "checked" the plague from God.
 - 2. On the other hand, God takes the initiative to forgive (Is 6:7; 53)
 - b. *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement (Lev 16), along with the guilt and sin offerings (Lev 4-5) are for atonement.
 - c. However, atonement can happen without sacrifice:
 - 1. David's sin with Bathsheba was forgiven because of a contrite heart (2 Sam. 12:1-14).
 - 2. Prayer also appears to be effective for atonement (Ex 32:11-14)
- 6. Consecration (Averbeck, 1001)
 - a. God commanded the priests to be consecrated with blood (Lev 8)
 - b. Washing and anointing also consecrated the priests (Lev 8)
 - c. Blood consecrated the people at Sinai (Ex 24:8).
 - d. Blood re-consecrated lepers when they were free from leprosy (Lev 14:14).
 - e. Blood consecrated the altar (Lev 16:19)
 - f. Consecration appears to have something to do with removing impurities, which is necessary to approach God.
 - 1. In addition to consecration by blood, the priest had to wash before approaching the altar or tent of meeting (Ex 40:16-38)
 - 2. The Day of atonement was to be "cleansed" from sin (Lev 16:30)
- 7. Juridical - The idea is that a person forfeits himself due to sin, so he must substitute another life for his in order to be released. (Dan, 6:13).

IV. God's deliverance, sacrifice, worship, daily living and ethics are all directly connected

- A. Worship is response to God's intervention
 - 1. People typically built altars and worshipped when God intervened on their behalf
 - 2. The law begins with God reminding the people that he delivered them from Egypt (Exodus 20:1)
 - 3. One of the motivations given to rest on the Sabbath and allow servants and animals to rest was because God freed Israel from hard labor in Egypt (Dt 5:15)

4. The national feasts were instituted to remember God's intervention. (Ex 13:14; Lev 23)
- B. A person who sins against another by being stealing or losing another's property is to make restitution plus 1/5 along with the guilt offering (Lev 6:1-7)
- C. The Israelites were not to be sold as slaves because God freed them from slavery in Egypt. If they sold themselves into slavery, they were to be treated as a hired hand (25:42).
- D. If a person lets a slave go free, he must generously give him provisions and not send him away empty handed because the Lord brought his people out of Egypt with provisions (Dt 15:12-15).
- E. The Israelites were not to oppress the poor, alien, or widow because the Lord redeemed his people from oppression in Egypt (Dt. 24:10-18)
- F. The Israelites were not to harvest all of their produce, but leave some for the poor because they were slaves in Egypt, but God was kind to them (Dt. 24:19-22)
- G. God defends the fatherless, the orphan, the widows and the aliens. Therefore the people were to love even the aliens because God does (Dt 10:12-22)

V. **Prophetic View of the Cult**

- A. The priestly theology saw no distinction between ethics and ritual. Leviticus 19 has ritual and ethical instruction interspersed together.
- B. However, many of the prophets made a sharp contrast between ritual and ethics:
 1. According to some, the view of the prophets and the priests are incompatible (Hendel, 195)
 - a. The prophets were interested in social change, and thus spoke out against the establishment, of which priests were a part. (Hendel, 192)
 - b. Like the priests, the prophets based their interpretation of worship on Yahweh's intervention (Hendel, 195).
 - c. Many credit the prophets with inventing "ethical monotheism" and being the "first protestants" (Hendel, 196).
 2. Prophets, such as Jeremiah, do not reject the cult per-se, but is more concerned with the heart felt obedience (Thompson, 288).
- C. Examples of passages that appear to either reject or downplay cultic worship.
 1. I Sam 15:22 - God is not after the sacrifice, but obedience.
 2. Isaiah 1:10-17
 - a. Rebellion makes offerings a stench rather than a soothing aroma to God.
 - b. This cannot be merely a rejection of sacrifice because God also rejects the other acts of worship as well
 3. Jer 7:1-15, 21-23
 - a. The temple is not a confessional to come, pay your fine, and go and do as you please (v.4, 9-10)
 - b. God is concerned with justice (v.5-6, 24)
 - c. God can remove the temple from them and cast them away (v.12-15)
 - d. God did not command them concerning sacrifices when he delivered them from Egypt (v.22)

- c. Verse 22 is a difficult verse because it seems to simply dismiss a good portion of the Pentateuch. One explanation is that this refers to the Ex 20:1-17 narrative, which is not concerned with cultic details. It was only after the covenant was ratified that cultic details were given (Thompson, 287).
- 4. Hosea 6:4-6 - God delights in loyalty rather than sacrifice.
- 5. Amos 5:21-24 - God will not accept sacrifices, songs, or festivals.
 - a. God demands justice and righteousness (v.24)
 - b. They were oppressing the poor (5:11-12)
- 6. Micah 6:6-8 - God requires justice, kindness, and to walk humbly with him.
- 7. Prov 21:3 - To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

VI. This doesn't mean God wanted them to stop all rituals.

- A. The royal reforms by the kings involved temple worship (I Kng 15:11-15; 22:43, 46; 2 Kng 15:3-4, 34-35; 18:3-4; 23:4-25; 2 Chr 29-31; 34:29-35:19)
- B. The problems is that the offerings were "unacceptable"
 - 1. The offerings must be without defect in order to be acceptable (Lev 22:21; Mal 1)
 - 2. On the other hand, offerings must also be accompanied by a clean heart in order to be acceptable and pleasing to God.
 - a. In Jeremiah 6:20, the offering was not acceptable because of continuous evil (Jer 6:7)
 - b. Psalm 24 indicates who can approach the Lord. It is he who has a clean heart, does not lift up his soul to an idol, or swear by what is false.
 - c. Isa 29:13 - The people were honoring God with their lips, but their heart was far from him.

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