

Holy Worship by Sinful People

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Date: 05 March 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20. Exodus chapter 20, and today we come to the end of the chapter, verses 22 through 26.

So if you'll look there with me, it says 20, beginning in verse 22. And the Lord said to Moses, Thus, you shall say to the people of Israel, You have seen for yourselves that I have taught with you from heaven.

You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourself gods of gold. An altar of earth you shall make for me, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, and your peace offerings, your sheep, and your aughts in, in every place where I cause my name to be remembered.

I will come to you and bless you. If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you profane it.

And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word, and we pray your blessing upon the word today, that your spirit would speak through your messenger, that your name would be glorified.

[1 : 45] Lord, that these regulations we see would make sense to us, would apply to us, and that we would give you the glory for your word. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. You may remember where we looked last week, but the people had seen the power, the majesty of God revealed on top of Mount Sinai, and they were afraid by what they experienced of God.

And so they requested that Moses be, for them, their mediator, to stand between them and God. And here we see Yahweh speak to Moses, and then Moses speaks to the people, which becomes a pattern that we'll see from here on out.

Moses begins to be really that mediator, and they respect him as such. And so this is the beginning of the book of the covenant. The book of the covenant covers chapters 20, well, from this verse 22 all the way through the end of chapter 23.

And it really is a practical outworking of what we see in the Ten Commandments. So the book of the covenant, it follows the Ten Commandments, and it practically applies them.

So this is what we're moving into, the practical application of the Ten Commandments. Now, we've seen some of that as we preach through the Ten Commandments, but what I mean by practical application is we're going to get more specific laws as they apply the Ten Commandments.

[3 : 09] Now, some of these are going to be very helpful for us. Not all of them would apply. This is more of the civil law for them as a people, how they would live before God. But we have to understand that the principle behind it in the Ten Commandments is also true for us.

And this is the application of the Ten Commandments. We might say if the Ten Commandments were prescriptive law, this is descriptive law. It's describing what that looks like.

And so like the Ten Commandments, it begins with the relationship between God and man. That vertical relationship, that first table of the law, is where we begin. So today we really see the first two commandments being addressed in our text.

One God and no idols. And so this passage is dealing with the practical application of proper worship. How do we worship God?

And then in the subsequent chapters, we're going to get more into maybe we think of the second table of the law. How do we live life by obeying the Ten Commandments? What does this look like? What are some laws that will help us to love our neighbor?

[4 : 18] So let's look at what's addressed here in the passage. First, in verses 22 through 23, we see the subject of idolatry being addressed. They've seen a theophany of God.

Just a fancy theological word, but a theophany means a revelation of God. They haven't seen God himself, or they would have died. They've seen God represented to them. And God has appeared to them in the form of fire and cloud, much like the Shekinah glory.

This has appeared maybe in greater detail, greater size perhaps on top of the mountain, along with we talked about earthquakes and thunder, whirlwinds.

And so they've seen God, and they are now more aware of his majesty and his power than they've ever been in their life. They've known more of who God is than they did before.

And so as we come to this, this regulation of not making an idol, you have to realize that nothing can compare to this God. Remember, they've also seen all the gods of the Egyptians defeated.

[5 : 25] And so now God says, you've seen my majesty, my glory, don't make idols. And I think one obvious reason is because they're insufficient. They don't measure up to who God is.

No other God, no idol, no representation of the true God could ever compare to the real and true God. They cannot properly represent him.

And so maybe another way of saying this is that the created cannot rightly represent the creator. We can't take the creation and make it like the creator. Or the finite cannot rightly represent the infinite.

How could it ever? But I think we also have an issue here of faithfulness to God. We taught some when we looked at the commandment on idolatry about spiritual adultery.

And so God's reminding them to be faithful to him, not to make any other gods, even to be beside him, nothing of gold or silver, whatever they may bring. In Deuteronomy 6, 4 through 5, we have that command here, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one.

[6 : 37] You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. The Lord is one. There's no other God. And we're to love him with all our might and being. So nothing else could be alongside him.

Nothing else could, in any way, share in his love and his worship that he deserves. Now, all throughout the entire book of the covenant, we're going to see, one of the things being addressed is, God's people are going to go into the promised land.

And they're to push out the other people or wipe out the other people that are there. God's given them the land. He's judging the people for their sin in the land. But the reality is, and we know that our God knows and understands this, that not all of them will be driven out.

Even around them, there's going to be people living in surrounding areas. But some even may be in their midst. And one thing that I believe God is addressing throughout the book of the covenant is, that they not take on the spiritual practices of the Canaanites.

Or the people who are in the land there, in the promised land. And so he's reminded of this, partly because the nations that they're going into, the land they're going to inhabit, is filled with false gods.

[7 : 49] And false worship. And so these people, who have seen the glory of God, who have seen their own sin, who fear God, now have to be reminded, don't go to that which is even more approachable.

If you approach Mount Sinai, even if you touched it, you would have died. That's your God. And so you understand the desire to have something that's more approachable than that.

How can I relate to God? Well, Moses, you go up there, you risk your life for us. But ultimately, the temptation to worship an object that we make is there because of the fear of the Lord.

And so as they go into the land, they're going to see all these false ways of worshiping. And God's saying, I want my worship to be distinct from that. Not alongside of it. It's not synergistic or synchrestic.

We're not combining religions here. It is one religion. You're going to worship me, it's going to look different than everything else you're going to see in the world around you. And we're going to see some of that even as we look at our next point about sacrifices.

[8 : 58] But I think about even idolatry today, most of us probably are making for ourselves idols. There may be ways in which created things become our idols. Maybe it's a vehicle or a house or other valuable things that we might desire.

But I think there are other ways. Just if I ask you, what are the things in your mind that you're tempted to place alongside of God? Or that you're tempted to give the affection and the honor that belongs only to God?

And I think if we think about it like that, there's something in all of our hearts, maybe multiple things in our hearts, that when it comes time, this was even a good test, you're here to worship the Lord. What goes through your mind in the course of a worship service? What are those things that are competing with God in our minds? What would we rather be thinking about than listening to the pastor go on and on?

What are those things that our mind wanders to? And so are there idols that we have in our minds that we give our affections to other than the true God? Maybe even our preference for entertainment, to worship, or even private devotion, I think.

[10:13] How much would we rather receive passively what's on the television or a movie than we would invest in study and diligent meditation upon the word of God?

So, first, one God, no other idols. Secondly, he talks to them about sacrifice. Now, we see this back in verses 24 through 26.

Let's look at that one more time. An altar of earth you shall make for me, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, you sheep and your aughts and in every place where I cause my name to be remembered.

I will come to you and bless you. If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you profane it. And you shall not go up by steps to my altar that your nakedness be exposed.

Now, God's given them the Ten Commandments. They've seen the Ten Commandments. They've seen God's glory. And now we have this provision of an altar. So, already, I mean, just received the Ten Commandments.

[11:27] God's giving an altar. Why is there a need for an altar? Because God knows his people will break the commandments. They're going to sin. There's going to be a need of sacrifice that the people might be made right before God again.

So, he gives his Ten Commandments. He also knew his people would break his Ten Commandments. Which, again, I think is a reminder for us that the Ten Commandments weren't given so that we could perfectly obey and get ourselves into heaven.

God gave the Ten Commandments as a revelation of his law, knowing that only Christ would be able to fulfill these things. He gives a sacrifice to make atonement for the sin. And so, the question probably going through their mind already was, God's given us his law, and remember what we talked about last week?

I promised that I would obey it back in chapter 19 of Exodus. Whatever God says, we will do. Well, wait a minute. They hear the Ten Commandments, all of a sudden it's like, eh.

And now they've seen the glory of God on the mountain. And they fear God. Fear approaching Him. And they know they're going to disobey Him. What hope can there be?

[12:42] This God's scary, and I'm still disobeying Him. And so, God provides for them a way back into fellowship and communion with Him after disobedience.

A way to make a covering for their sin. And so, we could say that the people needed more than just a mediator. They needed atonement. They needed their sins to be paid for.

Their sins to be covered. And so, all throughout Israel's history, altars and sacrifices are important because they could only come to God by way of atonement.

As sinful people, they could not approach God. How can we as sinful people worship a holy God? Well, we need sacrifice. We need atonement. We need our sins to be covered much as they did.

Hebrews 9.22 tells us, Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood. And without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

[13:48] So, it may be hard for us to understand this concept, but we need to understand that blood had to be spilled to pay the price for sin. Why is that? Well, the wages of sin is death.

And so, when you sin, you deserve death. And so, what we have here is substitutional sacrifice.

This animal serves as a substitute. It sheds its blood in your place. And so that your sin will be covered. And I would say temporarily. And we'll talk more about that. And in the passage speaks of two types of offering of sacrifices.

It says burnt offering and peace offerings. And so, just for a moment, let me discuss what, that's in verse 24 if you want to look back at that. But burnt offerings were to atone for sin.

An animal, this is where you'd place your hand upon it. It would be sacrificed. Sometimes even you being involved in that sacrifice. And then placed upon the altar. And the whole animal was

consumed in fire.

[14:53] None of it was to be eaten because it bore your sin. And so, this whole animal would be consumed. It would shed its blood. It would be consumed by fire. Representative of what we deserve for our sin.

Listen to Exodus 29, 15 through 18. Then you shall take one of the rams and Aaron and his son shall lay their hands on the head of the ram.

And you shall kill the ram and shall take its blood and throw it against the sides of the altar. Then you shall cut the ram into pieces and wash its entrails and its leads and put them with its pieces and its head and burn the whole ram on the altar.

It is a burnt offering to the Lord. It is a pleasing aroma of food offering to the Lord. So, the burnt offering was specifically to cover sin. It was addressing that problem that we talked about that they broke in God's law and if they want to approach Him, there has to be a covering for their sin. And then the second offering that's mentioned in verse 24 is a peace offering or sometimes in some versions of the Bible it's referred to as a fellowship offering. So, the peace or fellowship offering is celebrating the peace in the relationship, the fellowship they have with God after the burnt offering has been made.

[16:15] After a sacrifice of atonement has been made. And so, they're celebrating that they now have fellowship with God again. That there's peace between them and God. Because, as a sinful people, there can be no peace between them and a holy God.

But, because of sacrifice and atonement, they have peace with God and so now they can celebrate, rejoice in this peace that they have, this relationship that has been restored with them.

And so, the peace offering or the fellowship offering always followed the burnt offering. Because apart from the shedding of blood, there is no atonement and therefore there is no peace with God. God's anger must be turned away and the sinner must be forgiven before there can be that peace, that fellowship with God. And then he describes how the altar was to be built.

It was to be a simple altar. It could be made of earth. It could be piled up earth that makes up this altar. Or it could be made of natural stones. And it's very specific in the instructions that the stones could not be hewn.

[17:21] And what that means is just any kind of tool used on it, any kind of shaping of them. You couldn't make them into nice blots. You couldn't put fancy designs on the side of them. Ornate stones could not be used.

That would be natural, the way God has put them there on the earth. Why is that? Is there something wrong with stone work? Well, again, I think we see an example of God saying his worship is to be apart from or different than the worship of the gods of the Canaanites.

The Canaanites were known for having either they'd make smooth stones, like polished type stones, or they'd put elaborate designs of their God on the side of the stones.

One commentator, John McKay, he says, An altar made from such costly and aesthetically pleasing stone would be a tribute to human craftsmanship, but it would be defiled from the Lord's point of view because it distracted attention from him and his goodness.

The restriction to natural stone would have emphasized that it was a God-given provision and not an act of human conception. It would also have prevented carving divine images on the altar.

[18:40] So here we see a few reasons why this was done this way. They've just been told, Don't make images of God. And the moment we start carving up rock, our temptation is to want to make something that looks like God, that reminds us of God, that in some way leads us into God's worship.

He said, We'd be wrong. We would defile it if we did that. But also the idea that God has provided this. When we look at it, we're not praising how beautiful the stone is.

Part of this even goes to, I think, even the Reformed tradition of simple sanctuaries or churches. Why is this church elaborate in its decorations with its glasses or its ceiling?

The stonework that may be in it, carvings. Part of it is because we're here to worship the unseen God, not to make images, not to make anything that might distract our attention away from his worship.

And so one thing he's guarding it against is the design being a source of worship. It being something that we worship instead of worshipping God. And part of that, again, is it could well be the craftsman, the one who worked the tool on it.

[19 : 56] I even read in my study that with the Canaanites, that some of their tools were considered sacred. If they had been used to make a stone for the altar, then even this tool would be worshipped, as though it somehow became holy by the practice.

Now, I will say later on, we see the tabernacle and then the temple. God gives people with craftsmanship to build, according to his specific description, something somewhat elaborate. But here he's clear that it's to be simple in his worship. So the first altar and sacrifices happened immediately.

Now, this is recounted to us in Exodus 24, after the giving of the book of the covenant, but you can see from the text that the timing of it is one that it is actually occurring immediately.

So Exodus 24, verses 3 through 8. Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice that said, all the words that the Lord has spoken, we will do.

[21 : 06] And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and 12 pillars according to the 12 tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord.

And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, all that the Lord has spoken, we will do and we will be obedient.

And Moses took the blood and he threw it on the people and said, behold, the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words. So a few observations.

It says, Moses came down. He told the people what was there. He wrote it down. This is probably speaking of the Ten Commandments. And then he read for them the book of the covenant, which is what we just entered into all the way through the end of chapter three.

He read that out loud for them and they affirmed it. And we see there that they did the sacrifices before the reading of the book of the covenant. So right away, there's sacrifice being made to God. But also, you notice probably something quite unique.

[22 : 19] He reads the book of the covenant and they say that they will do it. All that the Lord has spoken, we will do and we will be obedient. And then Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, behold, the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.

So just imagine, you notice no one sits up here. I think sometimes you're worried of the spray zone, right? But just imagine you're here worshiping and I couldn't possibly probably throw it far enough, but super soaker or whatever.

Blood goes all over you, right? What is that? What's going on? Why is he throwing blood on the people? Well, think of all that we've seen before.

That the sacrifice, blood is needed to cover sin. But also understand the concept of covenant. God's making covenant with them. They're reading the book of the covenant because God's made covenant with them.

They're to do what he's commanded them and he will bless them and he will be with them as their God, as they obey. And so the blood of the covenant, we've talked about covenants before, but let me remind you that a covenant, this is O. Palmer Robertson's definition, but a covenant is a bond in blood, sovereignly administered.

[23 : 36] And so coming from God, this covenant is a bond in blood. And what does that mean? Well, what that means is if you break the covenant, you die or you should die.

You deserve death. And so as Moses throws the blood on them, two things are going on. One is it's a reminder that if they break the covenant, that they deserve death.

The deserving of death. This should be your blood being poured out in your clothing if you disobey God. And so they get a visual representation of the seriousness of the commitment they just made. Your life is on the line. We talked a little bit about the marriage covenant. Till death do us part, I think doesn't mean when you die, I'm okay. There's truth in that.

But it's saying, should we break this covenant, death be upon me. They're committing to this before the Lord now. Promising God, we're going to do this and if we disobey, may we die.

[24 : 37] And are they going to perfectly obey God's command? Will they break the covenant? Of course they will. And so I think the second purpose of the blood is to remind them that they need

the blood of another to cover them.

That because they're going to disobey, because they deserve death, the only hope of forgiveness of sins, as we saw in Hebrews, is the blood of another.

And then we see, in verses 24 and 26, some regulations regarding their worship practice. Now, of course, idolatry and the altar were all part of this, but some other regulations about worship.

Back in our text, it says, An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it, burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen, and every place where I call my name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.

And then in verse 26, it says, And you shall not go up by steps to my altar that your nakedness be exposed on it. Okay, so, admittedly a little weird.

[25 : 41] We're going to talk about what this is and what's going on in their worship. Remember the purpose. Why did God's people leave Egypt? It wasn't just freedom from slavery.

It was also freedom of worship. As slaves in Egypt, they were surrounded by these false gods. Pharaoh had made himself into a god that was to be worshipped. And so they left Egypt to worship God.

Listen, it says 5.1. Afterward, Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

Let my people go that they may hold a feast to me, that they may worship me in the wilderness. Here we see the fulfillment of this.

They're gathering together at Mount Sinai. They've seen God's glory. They're offering sacrifices. They're worshipping God together here. This is the purpose that God, I want to say, made them for, but also redeemed them for, rescued them for out of Egypt.

[26 : 42] But we're also seeing this that God makes a promise to them. And again, part of the covenant I see is, we know the covenant promise that God says, I will be your God and you will be my people. Here we see, in verse 24, in the last part of the verse, that God would come to them and bless them.

God would come to them and bless them. Not a lot of detail given of what the blessing is, but God would come. He would meet with them and there would be a blessing upon his people for worshipping in this way. We're also told that these practices that he's going to lay out in the book of the covenant, this altar, the way he describes how sacrifices should be made, that they are to do this wherever worship occurs.

That's really in the middle of verse 24. And this will continue until there's finally a central location. You even get the idea of this being made, making altars.

It's simple. You can mound some dirt up. You can put some rocks up in some form. And it seems to me the practice that this would go on, again, this is before the Levitical system and before the tabernacle, that it may well have been done in families, that they all were making sacrifices to the Lord.

But we see in Deuteronomy 12 a shift. But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from your enemies around so that you live in safety, then to the place that the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the Lord.

[28 : 29] And so, wherever they go, and remember, they're a nomad people. they're traveling through the desert and they will be for 40 years. Wherever they go, wherever the tabernacle is set up, it's going to be easy to make an altar to worship on.

But there's coming a day when they cross the Jordan, when they enter the promised land, that God will choose a place for his own where his temple will be, and there they will worship him. Now, what about the steps?

Again, this is somewhat awkward, but I think one of the things being addressed is not to be confused with Canaan practices of worship. So, let's talk about the Canaanites.

For the Canaanites, ritual nudity and ritual prostitution were a part of their worship of their gods.

There were other sexual acts, orgies, and things that were common to the worship of false gods of that day.

And so, this is what they would be participating in. And I think there's a protection of that, that God's saying, I don't want even a hint of anything like that in my worship. I don't want immodesty to be a part of our worship.

[29 : 38] Other religions would also be, build steps to their altar to increase the importance of it, to raise it. And he's saying, I'm asking you, don't do that either.

It's going to be a simple altar, it's going to be about me, it's not going to be about the architecture of it, it's not going to be about, again, your bodies. There could even be a way in the sense that as they walk up to the altar, not just for the sake of the people beholding their nakedness, but also exposing their nakedness to the altar itself, could in some way defile the altar.

And God's protecting them against this. In God's word, we see at times because of sin, because of the fall, that nakedness is seen as a sign of humiliation before God.

For example, Adam and Eve in the garden, remember they realized they were naked before God and they hid themselves from God and then covered themselves even with fig leaves. And God, in his grace and mercy, provided a sacrifice for them and covered them with the skin of an animal.

We know that armies would often do this to captives. For example, we have Assyria in Isaiah 23-4. When they conquered a people, they would march the leaders out before all the people completely naked as a way of humiliating them, look what we've done to these people.

[30 : 59] Now, interestingly enough, later on, steps were allowed to the altar. And we see, for example, provisions in Leviticus 6-10 and Leviticus 9-22. But, the priests had to wear linen undergarments.

Now, I debated, I'm not trying to be funny, but there is a way in which this could be the original source of men's boxer shorts. In Exodus 28-42-43, it says, you shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh.

They shall reach from the hips to the thighs, and they shall be on Aaron and his sons when they go into the tent of meeting or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place. Lest they bear guilt and die, this shall be a statute forever for him and for his offspring after him.

So they were commanded to wear linen undergarments, that this would never be the case, what we've spoken of here. So, again, I think two things.

One is protection of the altar itself, that it would not be exposed to our nakedness and in some way it be defiled. But also for the sake of the people, that that doesn't become a part of our worship. It's not a distraction, it's not, no immodesty going on, in no way do we want our worship to resemble the wrong sexual acts of the Canaanites in their worship.

[32 : 18] So don't be confused by that, let's stay pure in our worship. Maybe the New Testament corresponding verse would be 1 Corinthians 14, 40. But all things should be done decently and in order.

I mean, this is really what God's laying out. It should be done decently, modestly, but also in order, the way I prescribed it. Don't fall into the habits of the people around you. So this is the beginning of the book of the covenant and addressing issues of worshiping the one God and idolatry or just worship in general.

How does it apply to us? What can we conclude from this in application? Well, first, as we think about even the verse we just looked at, 1 Corinthians 14, 40, all things should be done decently in order.

We understand that God is to be worshipped in the way that he requires. Or we could say even the way he mandates. God is to be worshipped in the way he requires. We don't invent ways of worshipping God, even today.

I know we talked a good bit about the regular principle recently. We went through that in our Sunday school classes, so you're probably well familiar with that, but our belief is that we worship God the way God's commanded.

[33 : 31] We're not free to add whatever we want to add to God's worship. God is to be worshipped the way he describes. There's certain elements that he's given us to be a part of our worship. We are to do those.

We don't invent other things to add to that. And so, they're being reminded of this as well. You're going to go in a land where worship's going to look a lot different than my worship.

What if you see them doing something really neat or cool? Are we going to take on those practices? Specifically, I think, the idea that there's to be no altars, excuse me, no idols, that have specific

types of altars, and there's to be modesty.

You're not going to do it like they do it. There's going to be no confusion with pagan worship or the surrounding peoples. Don't take their practices and mix them with my worship. That would be dishonoring to the true God.

I think because of that, because of a commitment to that, I think our worship may look different than the worship of other churches. But we believe that we're to do it the way God mandates, that we're not free to do it any way we want to.

[34 : 41] And I know the trend in our society is to make our church and our worship more like the world around us. That's not what God lays out for us.

In fact, I think part of what makes the church distinct is they don't conform to the world. They stand out. There's something different that we're offering than what the theater offers or the television offers.

We're not conforming to the world around us. That means, I was thinking about it even as I looked at our bulletin, the three E's that we have there.

The fourth E is not entertainment. Right? There's another E that I think is very important for some churches and it's not about our preferences or scratching, itching ears, but it's the word of God and how God mandates we are to worship.

So we begin with what God mandates and not what we prefer. Secondly, we see God's gracious acceptance of our worship wherever His people call upon His name.

[35 : 51] You may remember back in verse 24 it said, then He will meet with us and bless us.

Wherever you are, you're going to build this altar, you're going to sacrifice to the Lord and He's going to meet with you there and He's going to bless you in your worship.

Now we know this even to a greater degree in the New Testament because there is coming a day, Jesus said, and now is when His people will worship Him in spirit and truth.

It won't be on that mountain or this mountain that you go to worship God. It's not about this location, 27 Procure Boulevard. There's nothing magical about this location. Wherever God's people gather to worship, He will be with them.

We will worship Him in spirit and truth. Matthew 18, 20, a verse probably many of you are familiar with. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.

And so, we have this promise as well. When we gather and we worship God, together as His people, God meets with us there. Scripture speaks of it even in terms of our being carried up into the very heavenlies where God is.

[37 : 00] But God's presence is with us and there's a blessing in it when we gather together for His worship. Now third, Jesus is our atoning sacrifice.

As we think about what they went through, this practice, this blood that they had to make sacrifice for, we need to be reminded that Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. We're like them.

We've gone through the Ten Commandments and I personally realized I've broken all ten. I hope you all came to the same conclusion. None of us keep God's commandments and there's nothing to take lightly.

Instead, we're to realize that we stand as sinners before a holy God. What hope can there be for us? How can a sinful people worship a holy God?

Ephesians 5.2 says, And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[38 : 05] What is our sacrifice? What sacrifice do we bring to God today? Well, we don't bring a bull. We don't bring otzen, sheep or lambs.

No, Christ is our sacrifice. A fragrant offering which feeds to the burnt offering. Remember, when you burn that offering, the aroma, the fragrance will be, God will delight in that fragrance.

And so, Christ is a fragrant offering that we delight in. It's sacrifice to God. That same word, sacrifice. 1 Corinthians 5.7, For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

We talked before when we looked at the earlier chapters of Exodus about the Passover and how Christ is our Passover lamb. But why is Christ our sacrifice?

Well, we understand that Christ is our sacrifice because all the preceding sacrifices, the sacrificial system, was insufficient to do the job. Hebrews 10.4, For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[39 : 18] Now, wait a minute. It's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Then why did God prescribe this? Why the altar?

Why the burnt offering? Why the peace offering? Why any of it if the blood of bulls and goats cannot remove sin? Let me read another passage before I really talk about the answer.

Hebrews 10, same chapters, verse 4, a little further on, verses 11 and 12. And every priest stands daily at his sacrifice, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. So there's a contrast being made between the priesthood but also the sacrifice.

These priests keep offering sacrifices day after day, same sacrifice, animal after animal being sacrificed, and they never take away sin.

[40 : 24] But Christ, when he had offered for one time, single time, a sacrifice for sins, he sat down. He's done. There's no continuing work.

There's not day after day after day. Again, there's no need for the continuing mass that we would be sacrificing Christ. We don't repeat the sacrifice of Christ.

He did it one time, he sat down, it's over. So, why is Christ our atoning sacrifice? Well, two reasons. One, we've seen those sacrifices never took away sin. So, what did they do? God's word tells us that they covered the sinner. They temporarily allowed God to overlook the sin until the price could be fully paid.

And so, sinners could approach God by being covered, their sin being covered by the blood of an animal until full atonement had been made for their sin, which did not happen until Christ came.

[41 : 28] And when Christ comes, the veil to the altar, the curtain is torn from top to bottom because there is no longer any separation. There's no longer a need for a sacrifice. It is, as it were, with God's spirit indwelling the Christian, we've all entered into the Holy of Holies through Christ's sacrifice.

Not by any animal, but our sins have actually been taken away now. They don't have to be repeated. Why did they have to be repeated before? Because they would cover us and then we'd sin again.

It's almost like we'd throw another topping of dirt on top of the paint. So we'd paint it red again and then we'd get dirty again and we'd have to cover it up. You guys have probably experienced this, that sometimes it's easier to cover up the dirt than it is to try to actually scrub it and clean it and get it back clean.

And so, coat after coat after coat of animal's blood, covering sin, covering sin. But it didn't deal with the problem. It was all still there under the cover. You ever tried painting over rust and hoping it would go away?

It's eating through from the inside all along. And Christ comes and he completely does away with it. Cast as far as the east is from the west. And so, that was the first reason.

[42 : 44] Why? Because those sacrifices were insufficient. But the second reason why is because Christ's sacrifice is sufficient. He actually does take away our sin.

He deals with the problem they're done away with by the blood of Christ. And so, how do we do this then? Since we don't repeat the sacrifice of Christ, how do we go about maybe I should say applying God's sacrifice of Christ to our hearts?

Well, we receive the sacrifice by faith. Romans 3.25 says, speaking of Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

Propitiation means more than, but at the very least it means atoning sacrifice and even more. But this atoning sacrifice that I spoke of is Christ and it is to be received by faith.

So, what does it take for you to have your sins forgiven? You don't have to go to the temple every day, place your head on the animal, help cut its throat, help cut it into pieces, burn it on the altar, smell the smell of it burning, and be reminded of your sin day after day after day.

[43 : 59] What do you have to do? Salvation is simply belief. Trust in Jesus Christ. Sacrifice for your sins. Your hope is not the covering of an animal.

Your hope is not your goodness, your obedience to the Ten Commandments. Your hope is Christ, His righteousness, His death for your sin, His atoning sacrifice. Now, I've said, Jesus then is our sacrifice.

And so, my next point doesn't make a lot of sense, but bear with me. Fourthly, our altar and our sacrifice, which I realize is not a complete sentence in your notes there, but our altar and sacrifice.

What is our altar and sacrifice then today? I've said already, Jesus is our sacrifice, but God does call us still to make sacrifice. What does that look like? Well, just two passages here to help us understand.

Hebrews 13, 10 through 16. I said two passages. There are many that you could address. Even after finishing the sermon, saw others in the book of Psalms. But for now, Hebrews 13, 10 through 16.

[45 : 06] We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice. Did you catch that? Let us continually through Christ, we're going to continually offer up sacrifices.

And what is it? It's not the mass. It's not Christ that we're offering up. Offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. So here we're given there are two sacrifices he says. Continual sacrifices that we as Christians make not to cover our sin.

[46 : 19] Instead, a sacrifice of praise to God. So in other words, we do still make sacrifices, but what is the nature of our sacrifice?

It is like the peace offering. It is a blessing. We're thanking God that we have received forgiveness of our sins. That we don't have to make that sacrifice. And so what sacrifice do we make?

Well, one is that sacrifice of praise to God. The fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. The sacrifice God calls us to make, we're doing today here.

We gather together God's people and we praise his name. We do this wherever we worship God in spirit and truth. It may be at home in our private, in our bedrooms, in our closet, wherever it may be that we have our devotions with God, but we meet with God and we praise and we sacrifice worship to him.

And we could say with that, we give up other things. We may be giving up our time. We may be giving up our sleep. We may be giving up other things going on on Sundays that we formerly participated in that we may gather with God's people and offer to him praise, but we sacrifice praise to him.

[47 : 32] And then it also says do not neglect to do good and to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. And so we're told they're also doing good to others and giving what we have, sacrificing what God's given us.

Again, that could be time, that could be money, that we sacrifice to help others is a sacrifice that's pleasing to God. So again, if you want to offer sacrifice, this is what you do.

We don't kill an animal. We don't re-sacrifice Christ. Atonement has been made. We offer a sacrifice of praise. Even I think our obedience to the commandment or sacrifice of praise to God, not to earn atonement, but in thankfulness that we have been atoned by the blood of the Lamb.

One final one, Romans 12, 1, very similar, but it says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, think of what mercies of God we've known. It's that forgiveness, it's that atonement, it's that sacrifice.

To present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. So what does it look like for us today? I think Romans 12, 1 tells us it's all of our life.

[48 : 47] We're to give to God our lives, our very bodies. Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. They're to be holy for the Lord. And so how we live, the choices we make, what we do are all to be a sacrifice of praise to God because Christ has sacrificed himself for us that we could have atonement.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a gracious and merciful God that you have shown forgiveness.

Lord, if we had been progressing through the process that the Israelites went through, we no doubt would have been afraid to promise to obey your commandments, to hear them and know that, Lord, we do those.

We break those commandments. What hope can there be? And Lord, we thank you that you provided a sacrifice and Lord, that ultimately you replace those sacrifices with the blood of the Passover lamb, Jesus Christ, whose blood covers all our sin, cleanses us, takes it away. And Lord, we pray for any of this room who have not trusted in Jesus Christ that they would do so today, that they would receive that sacrifice by faith. And Lord, we pray for those who have received that sacrifice, that they would then sacrifice, Lord, not for their redemption, their atonement, for their sins, but Lord, a sacrifice of praise for the mercies that you have lavished upon us, the riches of your grace that we have known in Jesus Christ.

[50 : 27] May we be motivated, Lord, to give our lives to you and to others. Lord, even fulfilling what you've set before us in the Ten Commandments and loving you and loving others. Lord, out of what we have experienced in Christ, that sacrifice, Lord, may it motivate us to sacrifice.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.