

Sin Offering

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[0:00] A couple of years ago, my wife and I and some friends of ours went to see Shakespeare's Macbeth at Notre Dame.

! It's the story, if you don't know, of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and how they murder their king, King Duncan, so that they can be the king and queen of Scotland.

And what happens afterwards and how the horrid guilt of what they've done ends up destroying both of them.

And one of the reoccurring themes is, how can you wash away the blood of murder? What can wash away sin?

Right after Macbeth murders Duncan, Macbeth wonders, will all of Neptune's oceans wash away the blood? And later, Lady Macbeth sleepwalks through the castle where they're living.

[1:04] And as she stumbles around, she is trying to wash her hands and she's rubbing them and talking to herself and trying to clean out the spots of blood that she keeps seeing on her hands.

And nothing works. And she eventually kills herself in despair. What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? Shakespeare doesn't give you an answer, except it's not water. Water cannot wash away sin.

No amount of water can wash away blood-stained hands and wash a blood-stained conscience clean. But where Shakespeare fails, the Bible gives us an answer.

Water cannot wash away sin. And the strange answer is that only blood will do. Only blood will do. Only blood can clean blood-stained hands and only blood can clean a blood-stained conscience.

[2:16] Only blood can wash away sin. And tonight, Lord willing, we're going to see that from Leviticus. And so I'd invite you there. I'd invite you to turn there to Leviticus chapter 4.

Over the past three Lord's Supper's, we've been looking at how Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament sacrifices. With His sacrifice on the cross.

And tonight we come to the sin offering. And as we've done before, I just want to ask three simple questions concerning this offering.

And the first is, what is the sin offering for? What was it supposed to do? What was it supposed to picture? Well, let's look at chapter 4, verse 1, and we'll read the first couple of verses.

The Lord said to Moses, Say to the Israelites, When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the Lord a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.

[3:39] So here we have our first clue as to what the sin offering was for. It was for sins committed unintentionally. What exactly is an unintentional sin?

Well, in Leviticus, there's a comparison of unintentional sin and a sin that is high-handed, that came with premeditation, with high-handed rebellion.

And there are sections in Leviticus, in God's law, where it says, If someone sins in that way, with a high hand in direct rebellion to God, then there was no sacrifice available to him.

It was only death. So Numbers 15.30 says it like this, But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is a native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

So the sin offering took care of inadvertent, unintentional, accidental sins, sins without malice or forethought, not high-handed sins that Numbers 15.30 talks about.

[4:56] And we make the same distinction in our law courts. So say I'm hanging out with a buddy, and we're, I don't know, this is a preposterous illustration for a lot of reasons, but say we're hanging out with, I'm hanging out with a buddy, and I convince him that riding his bicycle off this cliff would just be totally awesome.

And so, he does. And he rides his bicycle off the cliff, whoa. And he falls to his death. Well, I would be found guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

But if I pushed him off the cliff, while he's on his bicycle, and I pushed him off because I hated him, and I secretly wanted to get back at him, and I wanted him dead, and I pushed him off the cliff, then I would be found guilty of murder.

There's a difference. Both are wrong, but one is worse than the other. And so, the sin offering was meant to atone for unintentional sins.

And so, how it would look would be like this. Let's say I was out fishing. And I'm talking to you about my last fishing trip, and I'm excited about this fish I caught, and you're looking at me with this big smile, and you're expecting it, you're wanting to hear a good story.

[6:29] And so, I make my story better, so, that you would like me more, I guess. So, I tell you I caught a fish this big. It was this big. And in reality, it was just this big.

Well, that's kind of the sin that we're talking about. I would go away, and I realized that I had lied. My fish wasn't this big.

It was only that big. I didn't set out to lie. I didn't, with a high hand, say, I hate God, and I hate truth, and so I'm lying.

I stumbled into this sin. I fell into it. Yes, I could have chosen not to, but I fell. And now I'm guilty. And I'm polluted. And the sin offering was meant to atone for sins like that. Unintentional sins.

[7:29] And I think that is all fairly straightforward. We're used to thinking of sin and sacrifice in those terms. But that's not the only time and the only place and the only occasion when an Israelite was to offer a sin offering.

And when we start to look at these other occasions, we get to see exactly what the sin offering was meant to take care of.

I won't ask you to turn there, but in Leviticus 12, it says that after a woman gives birth to a baby, birth to a child, she is ceremonially unclean for a specific period of time.

And after that specific period of time is over, she is to go to the temple or the place of meeting, the tent of meeting, and she was supposed to offer a sin offering.

Leviticus 12 says this, These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a birth offering and the other for a sin offering.

[8:44] In this way, the priest will make atonement for her and she will be clean. And all the ladies are saying, What? Really?

What in the world? I have a baby and now I have to make this offering. I have to make a sin offering. Why? I didn't sin.

Well, no, it's not a sin, obviously, to have a baby. But in the Old Testament system, you were ritually unclean.

You couldn't come into the temple to worship. The sin offering was a way, was God's way, to deal with this uncleanness.

And there were other situations where you were supposed to offer a sin offering if a person touched the carcass of an unclean animal. Then you were unclean.

[9:45] If you touched that animal, you were unclean and guilty and you were required to bring a sin offering. It's not exactly sin to touch an unclean, dead animal.

But it made you ritually unclean. In chapter 5 of Leviticus, it says if you touched any human uncleanness, even though you are unaware of it, when you learn of it, you will be guilty.

And in that case, you were to offer a sin offering for your cleansing. And so, the sin offering, it covered these two areas and it brought them together.

Unintentional sin and ritual uncleanness. And by bringing them in together, it taught the Israelites a very important lesson.

And that is, God is holy and sin is dirty. Sin defiles. God is light and Him there is no darkness.

[10:54] And so, He's holy. He's completely clean. But sin is filthy. It's deadly. It's a deadly, wretched stain.

And you can't come to worship with a stain on you. Your stain had to be taken care of. So sin pollutes.

And that's why Macbeth is such a powerful play. Who hasn't known that wretched feeling of guilt, of dirtiness when they've sinned.

Of that feeling of just scumminess when you've sinned. And who hasn't felt the urge to take a shower after a particular nasty bit of sin.

There's something about it that is so nasty and dirty. We know it. Sin makes us feel gross because sin is gross.

[11:53] But what God was offering through the sin offering was a way to be clean again. And so the sin offering provided atonement for sin.

And atonement has two different directions. It has direction towards God. It appeased His wrath. And it also has a direction towards sin.

It cleanses the sin. And so what the sin offering was for was for an Israelite who had sinned to find a way to be clean again.

And the way that He became clean was through the death of a substitute. We talked about that this morning at great length. Only blood can wash away sin.

Only the loss of a life can cleanse sin and make it go away. And so what was the sin offering for? It was to cleanse the dirty.

[12:56] The unclean. It was to purify the unholy. And so God was saying when you've seen your guilt when you've experienced that dirtiness when you felt your uncleanness don't run away come to me come to me through the substitute and you can be clean again.

So you begin to see how this points to Jesus. The second question how was the sin offering done? And we I can't go into great length and go through I mean Leviticus 4 is a long chapter and Leviticus 5 keeps on the discussion and so we can only hit a few highlights.

The first thing I want you to notice about how the sin offering was done was that it began with repentance. It began with repentance repeatedly through Leviticus 4 it says when they become aware of their sin they should do this and you see that in verse 14 when they become aware of the sin they committed verse 23 says when they become aware of the sin he committed and so on there's this it begins with an awareness of sin and a grief for the sin so the offering began not in the temple it started with repentance repentance with the turning away and disgust of what you've done and disgust of that sin well how do I know that well because why in the world would anyone go to the trouble of making a sin offering if they were okay with sin if they didn't care about being clean with God if it wasn't a big deal for them then they wouldn't worry about making an offering but here they are they're hating their sin and they're feeling that uncleanness they felt polluted they felt convicted and they wanted cleansing and so the sin offering was for the repentant second the sin offering was different for different people it was different for different people

Leviticus 4 goes through the list and it starts with the anointed priest if he sinned he had to offer a bull and then it goes to the whole community if they have sinned they need to offer a bull but if you were a leader in the community then you had to offer a goat and if you were a commoner you're Joe Schmo then you would offer a female goat or a lamb and if you're a poor Joe then two turtle doves two pigeons would work and if you were absolutely destitute then you could bring a little flower and that would be your offering well why the difference I mean this is where we have to ask well why what's so special about the priest's sin and the leader's sin why is it different isn't sin sin well in one sense sin is sin but in another sense certain sins and certain sins that come from certain people are more polluting than other sins so the sin of a priest is far more polluting to the community than just the sin of a leader or the sin of a commoner the priest handled the things of God he was at the temple he was all about the worship of God he was holy to the Lord and if he sinned it had a greater falling out there was more pollution down the river than with a normal person with an average person there was more dishonor to God's name there was more temptation for other people to follow him and you've seen it in your own day in different churches in different places when a pastor has an affair it is far worse it is far more polluting and damaging than when just a common church member has an affair both sin both are guilty but the pastor sin because of his higher position in the community it's much worse everyone is watching him and the glory of God is more maligned when someone higher up when a pastor sins than when someone else's sin the pollution goes further downstream and it worked the same way in the Old Testament the more polluting the sin the more expensive the sacrifice so a priest had to offer a bull and the commoner only a goat now third the sin offering was available to everyone it was available to everyone to the priest his sin might be absolutely heinous because it was more known more famous everyone knew it everyone saw it but yet for him he could still be cleansed through his substitute and the poor person who didn't have a dime to his name who was absolutely destitute he wasn't left out she

wasn't left out if she could bring a little flower she could be cleansed from her sin she could be washed and brought back into fellowship with God no one from the high priest to the poorest citizen the poorest slave in the land was excluded everyone was free to come and be cleansed now fourth point and this is going to sound strange to you this is a little bit different than what we're used to thinking but this is what the word of God says the blood cleansed the tabernacle it cleansed the temple the blood cleansed the tabernacle let's look at chapter four verse five then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the tent of meeting he is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of some of it seven times before the

[19 : 29] Lord in front of the curtain of the sanctuary the priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the Lord in the tent of meeting the rest of the bull's blood he shall pour out on the base at the base of the altar a burnt offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting and something like that is said in each section it's not always the same places but the blood is always offered somewhere sprinkled somewhere in the in the tabernacle well why I mean that's a little bit different that's strange because we're used to think of sin polluting us and the pollution being stuck on us but what this is picturing is that the pollution is actually stuck on God's holiness on his temple in his place sin pollutes

God's worship it pollutes God's glory because we always have to remember first and foremost that sin is not something that we do against other people it's something that we do against God it has ultimate reference to him and yes it makes us feel dirty but the stain finally is on God's holiness and so what can wash away that sin what can wash away my sin well not water it had to be blood it had to be the loss of a life and so here the priest was he sinned in some way he was unclean in some way and he didn't realize it yet he hadn't thought of it God hadn't convicted him of it but he was still working in the tabernacle and so as he worked he walked around the tabernacle he went by the curtain he went by the altar he participated in the burnt offering he walked around unclean before God and everywhere he went that stain was following him and he was dragging his dirt around the temple the dirt of his sin and God is saying that kind of dishonor cannot stand it has to be cleansed and that's what the blood did the blood was sprinkled around the temple in different places the priest his the focus was primarily inside the tent of meeting and the others it was more on the external because they weren't involved so much on the inside of the temple but the blood was sprinkled around the temple to cleanse it and so what is all that teaching the only death can cleanse sin only death can cleanse sin judgment must fall for sin to be washed away and so as the blood was splashed up against the curtain and on the altar and on the tips of the horns of the altar of incense the sin was cleansed because death had come judgment had fallen in all of those places everywhere that that priest had drug his sin there was blood splashed it was covered it was cleansed and so now the priest could come into the presence of

God and worship and the worshipers could come into the presence of God and worship because their sin had been cleansed and God's holiness had been cleansed and so he could come with a clean hands and clean heart knowing that everything was right between God and him and so that fulfilled this offering turn over in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 9 Hebrews chapter 9 and maybe this passage will make more sense to you now that you have the picture of the sin offering in your mind look at verse 23 Hebrews 9 verse 23 it was necessary then for the copies of the heavenly things that is the temple the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices for

God did not enter a man made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one he entered heaven itself now to appear for us in God's presence and so let's stop there do you see how Jesus fulfilled the sin offering he didn't sprinkle his blood around some earthly temple his blood went to the heavenly temple he purified the heavenly things he went into the very presence of God himself!

[24 : 59] he didn't deal with sin on an earthly temporal level he dealt with sin on the ultimate level he forever washed away the stain that sin had put on God's holiness and his glory and so he purified heaven itself from the filth of our sin and so what the earthly sacrifices never could do that is to reach into heaven itself and take care of sin ultimately Jesus did once and for all and so he forever took care of the stain that our sin put on God's holiness and glory and character and so if heaven itself is purified then sin is done there's no higher place there's no higher glory there's nothing left to do and so that's why we can skip down to Hebrews chapter 10 verse 11 and it says day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties again and again he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins but when this priest had offered that's

Jesus when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy the sin offerings of the Old Testament and Leviticus it did offer cleansing from sin but it was only a temporary cleansing you would become unclean again next time you had a child ladies you clean and next time you accidentally touched an animal you would be unclean and there were a hundred different ways that you would just be unclean and if you could read through Leviticus and actually put yourself into that place how often how much of the time would you be unclean go through it day after day you would run into this reality that I am unclean and I can't!

come to God unless I have a sacrifice and so that's the way it was next time you touched a dead animal next time you had a baby you'd be unclean again and again and again you would offer the same sacrifice and it was really never enough to ultimately and finally take care of sin but Jesus fulfilled the sin offering he didn't sacrifice himself again and again for us it was one time and what was the result look at verse 14 again what was the result of this one sacrifice he has made! perfect forever those who are being made holy Jesus has forever washed away your sins if you are a believer he's cleansed heaven he's cleansed us and he's made us perfect he who was without sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God so how clean are we now but we're as clean as God we're as righteous as God and so brothers and sisters that's what Jesus has done for you and that's what we remember tonight if you're trusting him you're remembering your purification he stood in your place and death came and judgment fell and as he took your sins upon himself and as death came to him he washed you white as snow and so now you can come into the presence of

God we can have communion with God and with Jesus Christ through the Lord's Supper and know that we are accepted because of him and so like I said tonight we remember our purification and so if you have believed then you can come to the supper and know that your sins have been washed as white as snow if you've never been washed and you're sitting in your sin you're sitting in your filth what should you do well there's only one place to go there's only one fountain that can wash away sin and it's the fountain of Jesus Christ it's at the foot of the cross where his blood is shed for men that when you cling to him you can be washed as white as snow and everyone is invited everyone whether you were rich or poor priest or commoner you were free to come and it's the same here the most important to the least important everyone is invited to the cross and everyone is invited to be purified anyone who felt dirty anyone who saw and knew and hated their sin they could come through the sin offering and be cleansed and it's the same now

[30 : 50] Jesus stands ready for anyone if you hate your sin then come to Jesus if you feel dirty then come to Jesus you can be washed as white as snow so what can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of Jesus for my cleansing this my plea nothing but the blood of Jesus glory glory this I sing nothing but the blood of Jesus all my praise for this I bring nothing but the blood of Jesus and so as we have and participate in the Lord's Supper let's do it with praise in our heart for the Lord who has washed us from our sin may may