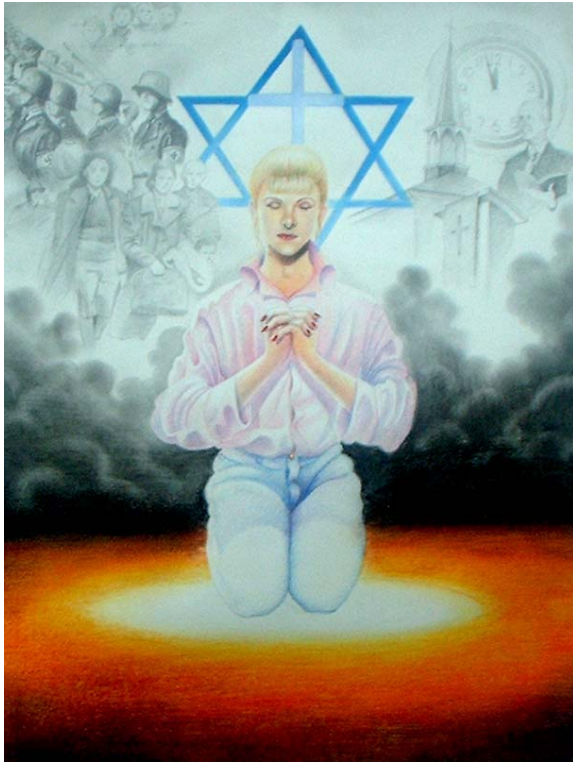


PRAYER AND THE WILL OF MAN:

Part 3

The Nature of Sacrifice



In March when I had a sense of where the Lord wanted these articles to go, I knew our discussion on prayer would eventually lead to worship. I have always taught about prayer, praise and worship as being all worship. In the past people have looked at me in an odd fashion because most ‘churched’ people are taught that these are three separate entities. But I have never had that understanding from the Holy Spirit. From the first that I can remember as a

child, I was always in song as I was in prayer or worship. As I grew older I understood the need, especially in church circles, to separate these topics in order to teach them in a more complete way to the brethren. But three years ago the Holy Spirit led me to share topically with a group of people concerning the priesthood, our Jordan crossing and the development of Solomon’s Temple, Herod’s Temple and an overview of the Tabernacle of Moses, which of course led to some teaching surrounding the Tabernacle of David and warfare. While speaking on these topics for several months, I realized that what we divide from us or shun, is what we need the most. Let me explain.

Over the last few months we have been speaking about prayer and the will of man. We looked at a ‘divided’ nature within David that caused a breach within his kingdom. Once he realized his sin, he had to offer a sacrifice. Sacrifice is worship, which is why prayer is worship, which is why praise is worship, which is why giving is worship and frankly, which is why anything we do of a sacrificial nature for God is worship within the kingdom of God. Christ’s sacrifice defeated the enemy of our souls. It takes sacrifice to foster a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Father. It takes sacrifice to serve His people as He feels they should be served. This is why we spoke about divine sovereignty and human responsibility last month. To even begin to understand why this is an aspect within the Godhead is

to sacrifice our human logic and reasoning for God’s perspective.

While teaching on these topics a few years back, our study found us in the book of Leviticus. Four times in Leviticus 21 we see a concept mentioned that resonates throughout every aspect of the order of Hebrew life. Leviticus is the book of order. God orders the lives of His people in society, in the priesthood and in temple worship. He orders them to understand clean and unclean, holy and profane. He teaches them about relationships and health issues among themselves and in what is acceptable within their homes. He helps them to understand the order of mixing clean and unclean and the order of the animal kingdom and their own agricultural needs. He orders His temple and its sacrifices and He specifically orders the priesthood that serves in and around His temple.

But in my opinion all these issues are centered on one central theme that is seen primarily in Leviticus 21 and it is this: A priest---and those of us that have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior are priests (See 1 Peter 2:5-9)---must remain holy and ordered in every aspect of their life “because they present offerings made to the Lord BY FIRE, THE FOOD OF THEIR GOD, they are to be holy. . . . Because I the Lord am holy---I who make you holy.” (See Leviticus 21: 6, 8, 17, 21) The concept that God needs ‘food’ strikes many Christians as odd. But this concept of ‘food’ in the New Testament is summed up in Jesus Christ. (See John 4:31-34) It is Christ who offered Himself as

the One Supreme Sacrifice that satisfied the requirements of a Holy God. Once the requirements of righteousness and holiness are satisfied, fellowship, sustenance and growth are restored. Isn't this what food does in the natural? We need it to sustain us and we need it to grow and we also are social beings that have been placed in family units. We use food as fellowship to foster and maintain our family relationships.

This study on prayer, worship and praise could and still may take us into the 22 words for prayer, the understanding of praise, the 7 Hebrew words for praise, the history of worship in the Old Testament within the context of the priesthood, warfare, the kingdom, music, instruments, voices and the different sacrifices offered, and all the analogies and the fulfillment within the New Testament. These are all amazing teachings. They are necessary for a full understanding of what a priest is and how awesome God is to have established all these things, even before the foundation of the world (See Exodus 25:1-26:30, Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:11, 12 & Revelation 13:8). But none of it means a hill of beans if we forget one central issue, which speaks about order, which speaks about foundation, which speaks about what makes God happy and it is this: "Because they present offerings made to the Lord **BY FIRE**. . ." Why is this central? Why does this speak about order and why does it speak about foundation and why would it make God happy?

An offering made by fire is totally consumed. It is a sacrifice. Jesus was and is

our great High Priest (See Hebrews 9:11-14), who was the perfect sacrificial Lamb (See Revelation 5:6). No other foundation can be laid except this: Christ died for our sins. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3). It is God's order that those who come to Him in true worship come to Him in spirit and in truth. While my soul can and must magnify the Lord, my spirit must worship Him first. I must die in that part of me that is soulish to everything that is from the soulish realm. This will always cost us something. When we are divided as we saw David was in 1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Samuel 24, we cannot pray as God wills us to and we cannot worship Him in spirit and in truth. This is why a divided understanding of the Godhead and the nature of God will produce a divided sacrifice in us. That's another reason why we studied divine sovereignty and human will or responsibility last month. In order for David to be restored and the kingdom to be restored a sacrifice had to be offered. It had to cost David something. My understanding of the sacrifice cannot interfere with God's desired sacrifice. We cannot worship in the Holy Spirit in spirit and truth unless we are prepared for it to cost us something. As long as those who claim to worship are not willing to sacrifice, division will take place. (See 2 Samuel 24:17, 18, 24 & 25) When God sees someone willing to offer all, as Abraham was (See Genesis 22:12), then God provides Himself a sacrifice (See Genesis 22:13-18). Fire burns and consumes all. What is left is pure God. We can say we want the fire of God's glory but very few are willing to go through the fire of trial, rejection, persecution and testing and come

out on the other end with no apparent benefits in the natural but still worship God for His goodness, mercy and love. This is what produces the aroma that made God so long for human companionship that He made a promise in Genesis (See Genesis 8:20-22) when He smelled the sacrifice Noah offered up to Him. This is what makes our very lives willing sacrifices that are pleasing to God (See Romans 12:1-3). When song, music, fasting, prayer and giving is added to this kind of a life, it is easy to know what God's perfect will is for our lives because pure worship is offered.

We have something on television here in America called American idol. I don't like to talk about something unless I have observed it for myself and I am sorry to say that I have never seen this program. But I have been told by people that it is about young Americans singing before audiences for recognition and position. I have been told that the judges are looking for passionate and spectacular voices. I have also been told that 'failure' can come with disgrace. If this is a program that you have seen and I have not accurately relayed what this program is about, please don't hesitate to email us. If this is a program that you watch, please don't hear any criticism from me in what I am about to say. I pass no judgment on those that regularly watch television, nor anyone that watches this particular program. God put worship in the very core of mankind. We were created for the sole purpose to worship Him. So it does not surprise me that Hollywood or television is copying what worship looks like to them.

It does not surprise me that without the benefit of Jesus, the Sacrificial Lamb, their idol would be someone with passion or talent and that those they perceive as lacking would or could be disgraced. What the world views as failure and disgrace, God views as great success (remember Jesus?). But passion without the benefit of true sacrifice (persecution, rejection and trial) is a hollow talent.

One of the artists from the Art of Worship page (See the links on this web site) was telling me the story of an old woman in church one Sunday service who got up to sing. This young man was successful in the music industry before he got saved, so he would appreciate a good voice and a talented musician. There was an edge in his voice as he told me the story of listening to this elderly saint. Her voice was old and strained with years of service and trial. Her timing wasn't especially good and the song was quaint, to say the least. Yet as he relayed her solo to me, I could sense in my spirit how mightily the Holy Spirit touched him through this woman. It wasn't her talent that made this happen. It was years of a relationship of passionate prayer and song, years of hardship and trial in serving her Jesus---and years of not hesitating to still praise Him, no matter the cost. He said this to me: "Out of all the people who ministered that Sunday, she was the most anointed. It was her song that touched me the most." The reality of course is that she never would have won a thing on an American idol program. I have an equally sad realization that she probably would never have been

allowed to sing in any of our 'televised' church services---not because some Christians could not perceive the anointing of the Holy Spirit, many can. But because a large majority of Christians would be looking for talented passion and not hearing it, they would have rejected the true passion of the Holy Spirit. As a result they would have rejected what it means to worship Jesus in spirit and in truth.

Am I trying to say our worship music should be substandard? Absolutely not! I still take music lessons in order to serve the Lord with excellence. When we study the music of the temple we understand that they had to play with skill. What I am saying is that we have confused talented passion for the anointing that the Holy Spirit graciously deposits in our midst. What I am saying is that we have confused talented skill for God's glory on an instrument or voice. This has happened because we are divided in our sacrifice. Without a total sacrifice consumed in total fire (that which costs us something), the focus shifts to the wrong idol and we never perceive how the devil [Lucifer was the worship leader in heaven (See Ezekiel 28:13,14 KJV)] causes us to sacrifice God's glory for a human desire for talent.

Am I trying to discourage those who worship with an instrument or song? Absolutely not! I have spent years encouraging all different kinds of leaders, whether those in church or the secular world who live for Jesus as they eat, drink and breathe His word. There is an evil spirit that tries to make people doubt what they are

doing for God is any good or that they are not called to something God has called them to. For those of you in that category, whether your call is in a church setting or secular, I say with a loud and clear voice, **DO EVERYTHING THE BEST YOU CAN** and with excellence. Follow hard after what you believe Jesus is calling you to. Sacrifice all that you believe He is asking of you. I know for a fact that while the devil may fight you, God Almighty will smell the aroma of a sacrifice pleasing to Him. This is what causes Him to turn and alight on the sacrifice. When He does, you become incense housed in His whirlwind of worship. This whirlwind is what sweeps your enemy and my enemy, the devil away. Staying on the altar we are centered in Christ's peace and the Holy Spirit's presence. Faith eventually becomes sight. Praise goes up and His presence comes down. Worship goes up and His word comes down. Send His word back up in proclamation, prayer and fasting and He comes in glory!

Let me encourage those of you who are going through or have gone through trial, rejection, persecution and hardships of all kinds, that this is the fire of your sacrifice. When you go through this process undivided---with faith, not blaming God, or shrinking back from following Him---this is pure worship, this is pure praise, this is pure prayer. Whether music is ever involved or not, this is the best and most complete sacrifice that can ever be offered to God. These are those that worship Him in spirit and in truth. These are those that we will stand next to in heaven as we worship

around the throne of God. Whatever hardships or persecutions that may come America's way, if she goes through it believing Jesus and testifying of His great love, it will make our nation greater than all the armies or money or fame ever could. It will produce a revival of pure worship, pure sacrifice, pure prayer and praise. In this respect we may avert judgment because it will be the kind of food that sends up an aroma in the nostrils of God, which will be impossible for Him to resist. Guess who will come for dinner? For an eternity of suppers we will fellowship around His table, forever and ever. Amen! Log on next month for more . . .



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