

LET GOD ARISE!

The Wondrous Cross #7

Prayer Guide for Kingdomtide • Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis



Christ, Our Perfect Sacrifice

O Thou Whose Offering on the Tree

Charles Wesley

O Thou whose offering on the tree
The legal offerings all foreshowed,
Borrowed their whole effect from Thee,
And drew their virtue from Thy blood.

The blood of goats and bullocks slain,
Could never for one sin atone;
To purge the guilty offerer's stain,
Thine was the work, and Thine alone.

Vain in themselves their duties were,
Their services could never please,
Till joined with Thine, and made to share
The merits of Thy righteousness.

Forward they cast a faithful look
On Thy approaching sacrifice;
And thence their pleasing savor took,
And rose accepted in the skies.

These feeble types and shadows old,
Are all in Thee, the Truth, fulfilled;
We in Thy sacrifice behold
The substance of those rites revealed.

Thy meritorious sufferings past,
We see by faith to us brought back;
And, on Thy grand oblation cast,
Its saving benefits partake.

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Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis,
*(Ph.D., U of Iowa) is the
Director of World
Impact's Urban Ministry
Institute. He also serves
as World Impact's Vice
President of Leadership
Development.*

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Christ, the Antitype of All Sacrifices before God

How SHOULD the metaphors and types of the Bible impact our understanding of Jesus Christ and our spiritual formation and ministry? Why should we focus on the OT pictures and events, especially those associated with the Temple, let alone highlighting such (in some minds) esoterica in something like urban ministry, a 21st century reality as far away from ancient Palestine as you can possibly culturally be?

On the one hand, at a time when we are more pragmatic and practical than ever, a focus on symbol, metaphor, story, and image seems a waste of time (at worst) and a distraction (at best). Many churches have sought to jettison all loose symbolic luggage from their thinking and communication, seeking rather to concentrate on practical or existential matters, and ignoring or downplaying pre-modern preoccupation with the language of temple cultus—offering, sacrifice, blood, and atonement.

I for one believe that the entire corpus of Scripture has a single dominating subject—the person and work of Jesus Christ. At least five times in Scripture, Christ is proclaimed the theme of the Bible (cf. Matt. 5.17-18; John 5.9-40; Luke 24.27, 44-48; Heb. 10.6; John 1.41-45). In my thought, it is impossible to truly appreciate the message of Scripture without wrestling with the metaphors, motifs, and models of Scripture that emerge through biblical typology.

I would define a biblical type as an object, event, happening, image, or reality that prefigures in the Old Testament a reality in the New Testament, which is usually focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Literally, the term “type” means “the mark left by a blow, a stamped image, or (by analogy) a statue.” Figuratively, a type speaks in Scripture in various ways; either as a model used of imitation or a warning.



Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV)

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On the other side, the *fulfillment* of the type, called an antitype, literally means a striking back, to echo. Figuratively, an antitype is a thing resembling another, i.e., its counterpart; a thing formed for some pattern.

Pre-modern Interpretation of Inspired Ancients—Is It Okay?

When you think about thinking through types or living the motifs of Scripture, you should know that typology is a contested yet valid biblical hermeneutic. It is the way that Jesus and the apostles provided commentary on the Hebrew Bible, and correlated the message of the OT in light of the fuller revelation in Christ. Think of the ways in which Jesus typifies his life and ministry: Moses and the serpent in the wilderness, John 3.14-15; Jonah, Queen of Sheba, and Solomon, Matt. 12.40-42; Manna in the wilderness, John 6.49-51; Spiritual drink from the Rock, 1 Cor. 10.1-4. These motifs show us that the person of Jesus is foreshadowed in the events, objects, characters, and happenings of the OT, and explicitly exemplified in the NT.

The offerings of Scripture (burnt, meal, peace, trespass, and sin offerings) all reflect the glory of Christ's perfect sacrifice for us. Each sacrifice highlights a distinctive feature of the perfection and dedication of our Lord.

For instance, the burnt offering, probably the earliest and most basic form of sacrifice, is associated with the Hebrew expression connected to wholeness, completeness (cf. Deut. 33.10), and the concept of "going up" to the Lord (Ps. 66.13). It also is connected to the idea of offering thanksgiving to the Lord for his goodness or for "atonement," in this case a "covering" of righteousness for sin. This offering was sacrificed both in the morning and evening (Exod. 29.38-42; Ezra 3.3), as well as on the Sabbath, (Num. 28.9-10), at the ordination of priests (Lev. 8.18-21), on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16.3,24), on the first of the month, the new moon (Num. 28.11-14), at Passover (Num. 28.19,23), at Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks (Lev. 23.12,18; Num. 28.27), at the beginning of the seventh month (Num. 29.2,6), at the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 29.13). Whether it were a young bull, lamb, goat, turtledove, or young pigeon, it has to be both



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perfect and complete; regardless of one's wealth, class, or station, the offering was to be made.

Even the manner of offering the burnt offering is instructive. The one who offered was to lay a hand on the animal (a token of full identification with the sacrifice), and the offerer then was to kill it, afterwards then the priest would collect the blood, sprinkling it around the altar and the sanctuary, and the worshiper cut up and skinned the animal. The priest then arranged the various parts on the altar, and the entire animal was burned as a sacrifice, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. The only exception to this complete consumption was that the skin, the hide, was to be given to the priest.

Christ, the Perfect Antitype of Sacrifice

This offering, as all of the offerings of sacrifice, provides a concrete picture of the complete and utter sacrifice before the Lord which our Lord gave to the Father. To be sure, Christ is the perfect Antitype of Hebrew sacrifice. Look at the argument of the writer of Hebrews about Christ, his offering, the new covenant, and sacrifice to God:

Heb. 9.9-15 – (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, [10] but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. [11] But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. [13] For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, [14] how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God,



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*purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. [15]
Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are
called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has
occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under
the first covenant.*

Surely, the Father secured eternal redemption for his own through Christ by means of his shed blood on the Cross (cf. Heb. 8.10-12). His splendor and incarnation, his perfect sinless life and holiness, underwrite his sacrifice of infinite value, “who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (v. 14). In this redemption, the entire Trinity participates; Christ offers himself without blemish through the eternal Spirit to the Father as a pleasing sacrifice. Nothing is withheld and all is given: as a sacrifice to God, Jesus of Nazareth offered an “unblemished” offering to God, one that fittingly displays his perfection.

Look at how various passages in the NT announce to us the perfect redemption of Christ, speaking of his absolute obedience and righteousness before God.

- Tempted, yet without sin, Heb. 4.15 – For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- Separated from sinners, Heb. 7.26 – For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.
- As a baby, he will be called “holy”, Luke 1.35 – And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”



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- Christ always did those things that pleased the Father, John 8.29 – And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.
- The devil had no claim on him, John 14.30 – I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me.
- Jesus, a holy anointed servant, Acts 4.27 – for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.
- He knew no sin, 2 Cor. 5.21 – For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- Like a lamb without blemish or spot, 1 Pet. 1.19 – but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
- No sin and no deceit, 1 Pet. 2.22 – He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.
- In him there is no sin, 1 John 3.5 – You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

Healing and Cleansing for Us All

With a sacrifice so complete, so perfect, so whole, now Christ can handle all forms of self-condemnation, guilt, shame, and blame. Regardless of the level of self-hatred and religious pride, in spite of our obvious indebtedness to God and transgression of his law, God can forgive us, cleanse us, and wash us for the perfect sacrifice has been made on our behalf. Now, released, forgiven, and redeemed, we can forgive ourselves, forgive others, and yield ourselves to God as living sacrifices, the only reasonable thing to be done in the face of Christ's perfect sacrifice for us (Rom. 12.1-2). Rather than this sacrifice motif being pre-modern, old-fashioned, and out of vogue, it becomes the ground of a revolutionary new way (which really is the same ancient true way) of understanding ourselves through the vision and experience of the sacrifices in the Tabernacle/Temple cultus or experience.



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For us, Jesus is the sacrifice slain that can redeem the world, renew our lives, transform our self-image, heal our self-condemnation, provide us with Good News for the healing, washing, and reconciliation of the world. In the sacrifice we envision a living visual aid of the “really real”: a copy of the heavenly things.

Heb. 8.3-5 – For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. [4] Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. [5] They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”

In the offerings and sacrifices we receive both redemption for salvation and strength for spiritual pilgrimage. In Christ Jesus we bear witness and personally identify with by faith his free offering of himself without blemish to God, a sacrifice which reveals the fullness of Christ’s sufficiency for redemption from the curse and condemnation for all eternity. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3.13-14); he has delivered us from the wrath to come which will certainly appear on those who reject God’s salvation (1 Thess. 1.10); he has won eternal salvation for all humankind through his perfect offering on the Tree (Heb. 5.9).

Similarly, Christ’s perfect sacrifice provides those who are united with him by faith with daily cleansing, forgiveness, and strength for our spiritual journey. In Christ we have found the food that endures to eternal life, for he is the bread of life (John 6.35ff); we have come to him and he has not cast us out for he came down from heaven to accomplish the Father’s will and to lose none that belong to him. Truly, the Lord Jesus is the living bread that came down from heaven, and those of us who eat of this bread live forever. “And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6.40).



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A Message for the City—Come, Be Cleansed, Be Healed, and Set Free

This message of a perfect sacrifice which cleanses, redeems, heals, liberates, and transforms is precisely what the dark, hurting, and anemic city needs today. Mercy to end guilt and blame, reconciliation to end alienation and hatred, cleansing to heal depression and condemnation, and life to end hopelessness and despair. All is available in the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whose offering to God can recalibrate the course of our lives, our cities, and our nations. Let us continue to prophesy deliverance in his high and holy name, for in the picture of perfect sacrifice, we find again our hope and our freedom. As we continue to walk together in the shadow of the Cross this Christian Year, let us reaffirm our wonder before the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross for humankind, a sacrifice so perfect, so complete, and so thorough-going that it can cleanse those who come to God through it forever and for all time, releasing them from guilt and shame. Indeed, Christ is our perfect sacrifice. ■

The Season after Pentecost (Kingdomtide):

A Season of Christ's Harvest: Christ, Our Perfect Sacrifice

Heb. 10.12-14 (ESV) – But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, [13] waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. [14] For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Biblical Principle of the Season

During this Season after Pentecost, let us reaffirm Christ's fulfillment of the OT types in the offerings and sacrifices, confessing him to be God's perfect sacrifice for sin—the source of eternal redemption and an ever present source of strength and power for our spiritual pilgrimage in this world. The Gospel proclaims that in Jesus of Nazareth our sin debt and guilt has once for all be dealt with in his death and resurrection. Through him, we can now experience



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God's forgiveness, cleansing, and healing, all freely offered to those who identify and cling to Christ by faith. This is the Word that our cities are waiting for, and the Story that we are called to live out before the world.

Heb. 10.5-7 – Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; [6] in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. [7] Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

1 Pet. 1.18-20 – knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. [20] He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.

Heb. 9.14 – how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

An Example of This Season's Teaching: The Romans

Rom. 8.31-34 – What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.



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