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The Burnt Offering - The Birds

Introduction

How quickly another year has come and is almost gone. Swiftly have the days, weeks, and months flown by. Almost without warning the air is filled with Christmas carols, and among the millions on earth, some people do stop and think about the coming of the Lord into the world. When considering this and our present studies on the offerings, my mind was directed to the “birds” in the burnt offering.

It has often been said that the five creatures which could be offered as a Burnt Offering are divided into three groups: the bull, sheep or goats, turtledoves or pigeons (Lev. 1:2). In such a message there is often added the statement that in worship there are also three groups of people.

- a) Those who are the spiritual leaders of the saints who offer a very large comprehension of the Lord, a “bull” sized appreciation.
- b) Others do not have the depth of appreciation (and this is not to be deemed derogatory), they offer a “sheep” or “goat” appreciation.
- c) Others who have a smaller comprehension, they offer a “turtledove” or “pigeon” appreciation.
 - i) While there is an element of truth to this, yet I honestly think that if we were to rise in our appreciation to the height of the “bird”, there would be spiritual giants among the saints.

It is my belief that the bird, whether it is a turtledove or pigeon, carries very profound truths which I would love to more perfectly understand. I say this for several reasons:

- a) In consideration of these creatures, it is observed that the natural habitat of the bull, goat, and sheep was the earth. (In the KJV it says “bullock”, but we need to be careful for in the UK a bullock is a castrated animal, therefore, would be unfit for sacrifice.) The birds are different for their natural habitat is, “above the earth in the open firmament of Heaven” (Gen. 1:20). Therefore, it is the only one of the creatures which left its natural habitat and came down to where man dwelt.
- b) Had it not come down it could never have become a sacrifice, which, when applied to the Lord, the same truth applies, for had He not come down He could never have been the sacrifice for man’s sins.
- c) The bird’s life was taken through no guilt of its own. Likewise, our Lord did not suffer for His own sins but: “He was wounded for our transgressions” (Isa. 53:5).
- d) The bird came down not knowing that which lay ahead for it. Christ came down knowing not only why He was coming down, but also that which lay before Him.

Where The Lord Came Down From

1) How He Came Down

- a) We often, and rightly so, think of who the Lord came down from, but the most basic lesson from the birds is not who the Lord came down from but where He came down from. He came down from heaven. This was not the first time the Lord had come down but this time it was different. In all previous times He had come as a theophany, that is, having the appearance of manhood, but not a real human being of body, soul, and spirit (Lk. 24:3; Jn. 11:33; 12:27). Some of the times the Lord had come down before were when:
 - i) He spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:9); Abraham (Gen. 26:3); Moses (Ex. 3:5); and Manoah. (Jud. 13:13, 16)
 - ii) He came down to see the city man built in defiance of His command, and confounded their language. (Gen. 11:5-7)
 - iii) He came down to see the wickedness of the cities of the plain. (Gen. 18:21)
 - iv) He came down to commune with Abraham (Gen. 18:1, 9, 13-15, 17, 23-33)

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b) Furthermore, not only did the Lord come down in a new manifestation, He also came down revealing a new characteristic.

- i) When His people were at the Red Sea, He came down as a Man of War (Ex. 15:3).
- ii) Later at Sinai He came down as the frightening intimidating Jehovah (Ex. 20:19; Heb. 12:21), but this time He came down to be Mary's firstborn son.

In those mentioned cases God came down in legislative glory and judgment, but when he came to Bethlehem it was in wondrous humility, and the wise men came and worshiped Him (Matt. 2:11). Throughout the Old Testament He also came down as the Angel of the LORD. Indeed, every reference to the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament it is the Lord as the contexts will show (Gen. 16:7; Ex. 3:2), but in Bethlehem He is a little baby. Many of us have held a little baby, they are so helpless, and yet that baby was the omnipotent God.

2) Why He Came Down

a) When the Lord came down at Sinai it was to give the Israelites an awareness of the majesty of His glory, but when He came down to Bethlehem, it was for a distinctly different purpose. In John's first epistle He gives five reasons the Lord came down. They were:

- i) "To take away our sins" (1 Jn. 3:5)
- ii) "To destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8)
- iii) "To prove that he is of God" (1 Jn. 4:2)
- iv) "That we might live through Him" (1 Jn. 4:9)
- v) "To be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn. 4:14)

b) The same writer in his gospel informs us that the Lord came down "to do the will of Him that sent me" (Jn. 6:38). The writer of the Hebrews wrote how that by coming down to die and rising again, the Lord destroyed "him that had the power of death" (Heb. 2:14).

3) Where He Came Down From

a) He came down out of Heaven

- i) He came out of Heaven (Jn. 6:51); "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before" (Jn. 6:62); He is "the Lord from Heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47).

b) He left Heaven and in so doing, He left:

- i) Its glorification of Him for the shame of the cross, a change of dignity. (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 12:2)
- ii) Its holiness for a sphere of sinfulness, a change of environment. (Mk. 8:38; Lk. 24:7)
- iii) His riches for a place of poverty, a change of wealth. (2 Cor. 8:9)
- iv) His works being praised for a place of ridicule and belittlement, a change of acknowledgment (Matt. 27:29).

4) The Lord Came Down As:

a) It is easy to think merely of the physical body of the Lord when we think of what He came down as, it was as a baby. However, there is also the official avenue to consider for the Lord came down as: "The Hope of Israel" (Acts 26:6); "The Consolation of Israel" (Lk. 2:25); "Gods Perfect Servant" (Phil. 2:7); "Gods Appointed King" (Psa. 2:6); "The last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45); and "The second man" (1 Cor. 15:47).

- i) To the air for His people as a man: "This same Jesus" (Acts 1:11)
- ii) To the earth to righteously judge: "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." (Psa. 9:8)
- iii) Bethlehem was the first and only time He came down and became incarnate. (Rom. 9:5)

b) The truths this presents:

- i) The wonder of the condescension and incarnation
- ii) The wonder of divine love

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- iii) The wonder of divine consideration, grace, and wisdom
 - iv) The stupendousness of the incarnation
 - v) The Infinite became finite yet retained His Infiniteness
 - vi) Immortal became mortal
 - vii) Untouchable became touchable
- c) The One who:
- i) Was in the form of God was found in the form of a servant, the wonder of His Person
 - ii) Swaddled the earth was himself swaddled on earth, the wonder of His condescension
 - iii) Formed the light had his own form marred more than any man, the wonder of His humiliation.

Verses Which Relate To The Condescension and Incarnation Of The Lord

There are so many verses which relate to these truths, but my thoughts are on the almost “missed” clauses and the richness in them. Due to space our meditation will be restricted to just a few. Others could be Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14; and Titus 3:4.

There are seven passages in the New Testament which refer to Christ “made”. When we use the word “made” it can have the connotation of compulsion, i.e “he was made to do something” or the act of having made something that was not made before. Neither of these apply to the Lord.

- a) When we read the Lord “made” there is never the implication of reluctance, for the will of the Lord was ever to do the will of God (Heb. 10:9). Furthermore, it is an amazing truth, which is beyond understanding, that not only did the Lord become human without reluctance, but He did so willingly. The scriptures record: “For God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Had there been the slightest reluctance or hesitation in the Lord it would have indicated an objection to the will of God, and that would have been a sin. Such was never found in Christ.
- b) Again, when we read the Lord “made” it does not imply that there was a change from that which He eternally was, that is, the “fulness of the Godhead” (Col. 2:9); “The Word” (Jn. 1:1). It is vital to understand what was not changed when the Lord took a human body. There was no change in His deity (Phil. 2:6; 1 Tim. 3:16); His fellowship with God and the Father. The Lord was forsaken by God but never the Father (Jn. 10:30; Matt. 27:46); His devotedness and determination to do the will of God (Heb. 10:9); His relationship with the Father, for He was still the Son while on this earth, even as He had been in eternity past. (Isa. 9:6; Matt. 3:17; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3; 1 Jn. 4:14; Heb. 1:8)

The seven passages where the King James Version reads “made” are as follows, and would be better translated as “became”, or paraphrased “voluntarily became”. Only in (g) does He do this Himself, in all the others He bowed to the will of God, thus, He was:

- a) “Made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4) - His incarnation
- b) “Made of the seed of David” (Rom. 1:3) - His association
- c) “Made like unto his brethren” (Heb. 2:17) - His identification
- d) “Made a curse” (Gal. 3:13) - His substitution
- e) “Made under law” (Gal. 4:4) - His obligation
- f) “Made sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21) - His reconciliation
- g) “Made himself of no reputation” (Phil. 2:7) - His humiliation

Summary

May the Holy Spirit open our minds and hearts to the profound truths of the condescension and incarnation of our Lord from our meditations on the little bird.

... Rowan Jennings