

The Heart of Worship Leviticus 9



This is a Strowger Automatic Dial Candlestick. Everyone wanted one in 1905. This was the first dial telephone invented by Almon Strowger. Strowger was an undertaker in Kansas City who got upset because the phone operators kept connecting the wires to his competition. So Strowger developed the first automated telephone switch so people themselves could dial him directly over the wires. It was a great invention



This is the Motorola 3 G Droid x. A gadget I use every day. It's a 3rd generation Internet connected 8 mp HD video recorder wireless Smart Phone developed by Verizon because Apple and ATT were capturing the world's communication market with the iPhone. It was developed so people could be connected instantly and wirelessly throughout the world. An amazing invention and development from the Dial Candlestick.

Reading Leviticus is like reading an instruction manual for this Strowger phone to understand how to work a Droid x. At first glimpse we may think they are quite unrelated, and this would be an exercise in futility. At first glimpse we may think they are two totally different things. The fact is, however, if you don't understand the technology of the Strowger and the system needed for long distance wired communication you would never get to or understand the wireless Droid X and experience it's wonderful features.

Look at these two pictures. This is Israel at worship 4000 years ago. And this is Hope International Church at worship today. At first glimpse we may think they are quite unrelated. Two totally different things. The fact is, however, if we don't understand the theology of the atonement described Leviticus and highlighted in chapter 16 and the system of coming into the presence of God and accessing and experiencing his glory as described in Leviticus 9 we would never get to and understand the heart and the essence and the value of biblical worship and the importance of Jesus.

Leviticus is basically an operational manual that helps us to unlock the mysteries of Droid X worship, our worship today. Although cultures change, and people change, the Bible tells us God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Although cultures change and people change, and communication systems change, and even the world changes; the problem of human beings, the problem of being separated and alienated and estranged from God and not being able to experience God with us; is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And so Leviticus prepares us and guides us to enter into the presence of God and experience his glory and his blessings in a very unique way. A way that is described and assumed throughout the bible.

As I said Leviticus 16 is the focus of and the heart of this worship manual. Leviticus 16 is the action of turning on the Droit and experiencing all its features and all its applications without hindrance. Everything before chapter 16 is a leading to and preparation for, and a learning curve about, actually using the phone, actually engaging in that great gift of worship. Everything after chapter 16 is result of, and a product of, and a feature of and app of what happened in that chapter on atonement.

That chapter on atonement/at-one-ment explains how we can enter into oneness with and fellowship with God himself. How we can experience Immanuel God with us. How we can enter into the Holy of Holies and be overwhelmed and immersed in God's glory, and God's power and God's spirit; and all the features of his grace and all the apps of his truth are down loaded into our lives for our use, for our guidance and our healing and our comfort and strength.

Now chapter 9 comes before 16. Dah. It's a worship rehearsal before the big day, that turns out to be more spectacular than expected. On the first day of a new week (after ordaining Aaron, the high priest) Moses called all the people of Israel together to the tent of meeting. And Moses says to them in verse 6, "If you do exactly as the Lord commands in worship the glory of the Lord will appear to you. Will become accessible to you." And that is what they do: Aaron, the ordained high priest performs all the sacrifices and all the instructions of chapter 1-8 exactly as the Lord commanded and in the prescribe way. He first offers the sacrifices for himself. The pleasing aroma offering and the sin offering and fellowship offering. And then Aaron prepares the sacrifices for the people. As you may notice before completing the sacrifices for the people, Aaron the anointed high priest lifts his hands toward the people and blesses them.

At that point Moses and Aaron are allowed into the tent of meeting for the first time since Exodus 40. You may remember that when the Glory of the Lord filled the tent of meeting in Exodus 40 no one could come in, not even Moses. But now after all these sacrifices and offerings they may enter in. And as we learn from Chapter 16 Aaron goes into the Holy of Holies. This is that most holy place where the glory of God and the Cloud of his Spirit and the fire of his word lives (humanly speaking). And after spending some time in the presence of God Moses and Aaron come out of the tent of meeting, and they bless the people again and at that point the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. The fire and the power of the presence of God burned up the offerings and sacrifices the people had brought and Aaron had prepared and left unfinished at the door to the tent of meeting. In other words God himself finished the sacrifice. God himself provided the pleasing aroma, God himself provided the atonement for sin. God himself through the power of his glory finished the offering that opened the door to the tent of meeting so that the people could come in. God himself did what it took to restored the fellowship between him and his people.

When all the people saw these amazing things happening before their own eyes, and experienced the power of God's presence, they shouted for joy and fell facedown in worship. Now the reason they shouted for joy is explained in chapter 16. When that atonement sacrifice is made for the people it says in verse 30 of chapter 16 the people are cleansed. They are made clean from all their sins and they too are welcomed into the presence and glory of God and blessed to use all the features and the application of his grace for their lives. On that one day of the year, on the day of atonement, atonement was made for all the members of community. The burdens and the consequences and suffering resulting from sin were lifted. The slate was wiped clean. The people were forgiven. That is why they shouted for joy and fell face down.

Now this was first generation candlestick worship, ancient worship. What about Droit X or present day worship. What does this revelation of God suggest for us today? What theology do we need to understand from this ancient worship manual to help us understand and worship God today?

Let me suggest 3.

1. Worship: loving God is something we want to grow in in 2011; is all about giving glory to God for what God has done to restore the relationship between us and himself. Worship is not about us doing things to make us better people, or to make us happy, it is not a way for us to gain success in life. This teaching of Leviticus shows us that true worship is God designed and God prescribed, and God centered. God makes the way possible for atonement. Atonement – being reconnected to God and experiencing God - is the single and most intense need of the human heart. Today the way and the truth and the life of God and the process of atonement is experienced in the person of Jesus. He is the seventh generation candlestick of God. We shout for joy and fall down in prayer for the atonement and the forgiveness we receive in Jesus. In him we experience all the features of true worship and through him we access all the applications of grace available in God.
2. At the heart of worship is the process of becoming aware of our sin, listing them, confessing them and transferring them over to the sacrificial animal. We have a tendency to gloss over sin and brokenness and guilt. We have a tendency to give the impression that we are pretty good people – better than most- , and we would rather hide our flaws and our failings and our breaking of God's commandments. But even seventh generation worship, worship that participates in the glory of God, worship that is Jesus focused requires the confession of sin and the experience of forgiveness through the blood of the sacrifice. So when we have a time of confession in worship come prepared with list, come prepared with actual sins you need to be forgiven and released from.

3. Finally I would like highlight the title of Leviticus 9. Although the title is made up by the editors of this Bible version it is still a biblical teaching. This chapter is entitled the priests begin their ministry. Priests do a lot of the work so that the people can be drawn into the love and grace of God. They do the prep work and know what it takes for atonement to be experienced. And in this chapter we see the priests playing their part, but it is God who does the actual atoning. Priests are agents of God. When they lift up their hands in blessing the people ought to see the arms of God welcoming them into his heart and his life. The Bible teaches that we the followers of Jesus are God's priest. In 1 Peter 2 it says coming to God in Jesus in true worship makes us into a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ. We are now the chosen people, a royal priesthood, God's special features and applications and means of communication to declare the praises of the one and only who called all of us out of the darkness of sin into the God's wonderful light, the light of his glory. In other words - True biblical worship results in us serving the world and sharing God's love with others. Jesus said in John 17 as God sent me into the world so send I you.