

Animal Sacrifices Considered Holy

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In God's word, animals sacrificed according to His specific instructions are considered 'holy'. There are at least two reasons for applying this descriptive word to these sacrifices, and they will be examined in this study. Also, the nexus of these sacrifices to the Law of Moses will be explained. But first, here is the definition of 'holy':

Strong's Hebrew Dictionary definition (#6944): *dedicated, consecrated; separated for holy use or purpose.*

The following scriptural reference confirms that animals, which Almighty God designates as being acceptable, or 'clean' for the purpose of sacrifice, are considered 'holy' (cf. Lev. 11:47; 20:25; Dt. 14:11, 20). Also, the bread offered with them is 'holy'.

*And if **any of the flesh of the consecrated offerings, or of the bread**, remains until morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because **it is holy*** (Ex. 29:34; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; emphasis added).

Because the shed blood of every 'God-ordained' animal sacrifice foreshadowed the blood that Jesus Christ would shed when he died, these animals are described as 'holy'. In comparison to animals, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ could be regarded as 'most holy' as we will see later this study.

*But you denied **the Holy One** (Christ) and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you (Barabbas), ¹⁵and killed the Prince of life, whom God (the Father) raised from the*

dead, of which we are witnesses (Ac. 3:14-15; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11; cf. Heb. 9:22).

Through the animal sacrifices, Almighty God is teaching sinful mankind that they are all going to die "forever" unless someone who is "without sin" offers to lay down their life as a substitute (cf. Rom. 6:23a).

*But if any lasting harm follows (a physical confrontation), then **you shall give life for life*** (Ex. 21:23; cf. Dt. 19:11-13; 1Kgs. 20:42; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Almighty God wants to stress how serious and harmful sin is for everyone. Therefore, according to His law, the penalty for committing sin is everlasting death.

For the wages of sin is death... (Rom. 6:23a).

Sin is defined as the transgression, or breaking, of God's law and commandments. As the animal sacrificial system was fulfilled, when Christ shed his blood to cover the sins of the world, these are currently not a requirement as we will see later in this study.

*Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and **sin is lawlessness*** (1Jn. 3:4; emphasis added).

And there is no way out of this death penalty "humanly-speaking". For example, sinner # 1 cannot give up his life for sinner # 2 with the idea that the death of the first sinner will somehow provide the second sinner with everlasting life. Instead, because Jesus Christ did not sin, his life is of such immeasurable value

that it allows every repentant sinner to be forgiven and restored in their relationship with Almighty God, the Father, who had to watch His Son suffer tremendously and then die. Anyone with children knows how excruciating and intolerable this would be.

*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give his life a ransom for many** (Mt. 20:28; cf. Jn. 6:33; 10:11, 15; 15:13; emphasis added).*

*For we do not have a High Priest (Christ) who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted (tested) as we are, **yet without sin** (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

...but the gift of God (the Father) is eternal life in (through) Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23b; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Although an animal sacrificed during the First Covenant would act as a temporary substitute to cover, or atone for, the sin of the person offering it, it did not provide the repentant sinner with an intrinsic desire to obey God's word, nor did it allow the sinner to inherit everlasting life. What needs to be considered is that animals were not created in the image of God. Instead, they were created after their own kind (cf. Gen. 1:24-27). Logically then, someone created in the image of God, and without sin, would have to become a substitute that could not only provide the way for sins to be forgiven, but also the means through which sinners would have a deep desire to please and obey their heavenly Father. And this scenario can only occur when a sinner is able to receive God's Holy Spirit, which is promised to those who repent of their sins and then bury them "figuratively" in the water of baptism (cf. Rom. 6:3-6).

*This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, **He made him***

***in the likeness of God** (Gen. 5:1; cf. Gen. 1:26-27; emphasis added).*

*But God (the Father) has revealed them (His hidden truths) to us through His Spirit. For **the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God** (1Cor. 2:10; cf. Jn. 15:26; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

This is why Christ had to come in the likeness of mankind, and live a sinless life. By doing so, his shed blood would atone for the sins of the world and provide the way to everlasting life for those who repent of their sins and begin living a new life of willing obedience to every word of God. In order to accomplish this, repentant individuals are assisted and empowered by God's Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:38; Rom. 6:1-6; cf. Mt. 4:4).

For God (the Father) did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved (Jn. 3:17; Ed. note in parenthesis).

As mentioned in the first scripture quoted in this study, anything that remained of the bread or meat from the offering was to be burned so that nothing remained the next day (Ex. 29:34). Again, this is because the animal sacrifices, and bread associated with them, represented Christ's dead body that was not to undergo any corruption.

Him (Christ), being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God (the Father), you by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning him: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken; ²⁶Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh will also rest in

hope,²⁷ Because You (God the Father) will not leave my soul in Hades (the grave), **nor will You allow Your Holy One** (Christ) **to see corruption** (Ac. 2:23-27; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; cf. Ps. 16:10; 49:9; Ac. 2:31; 13:35).

And, as Christ is also referred to as "the bread of life", any bread that remained from the sacrificial offering of an animal was to be burned because it represented Christ's broken body that was not to undergo any deterioration.

For the bread of God is he (Christ) *who comes down from heaven and gives life (everlasting) to the world* (Jn. 6:33; Ed. notes in parentheses).

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." (Mt. 26:26; emphasis added).

At this point, it is important to stress that the regulations in God's law, associated with the animal sacrificial system, involved a great deal of physical labor on the part of the Levitical priesthood. Sadly, this truth is usually ignored by Christian leaders who take a monumental leap when they teach that the law of God is no longer applicable. This could not be further from the truth.

Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke (work associated with administering the animal sacrificial system) *on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?* (Ac. 15:10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

So much physical labor was required when performing animal sacrifices that officiating priests were retired by the age of fifty. After the age of fifty they could assist in various supervisory roles only.

*This is what pertains to the Levites: From twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting;*²⁵ **and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more.**²⁶ *They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work...* (Nu. 8:24-26a; emphasis added).

Included in the First Covenant system was the ordinance of circumcision, which Paul states does not justify, or excuse, our sinful actions. In other words, it does not confer a special relationship with God that overrides the penalty for committing sin.

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing (Gal. 5:2).

So shedding a small amount of blood during circumcision, or experiencing any discomfort associated with being circumcised does not justify, or excuse sin. Instead, it is Christ's suffering and shed blood that provides the means through which every repentant sinner can be forgiven.

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by (the) *law* (of circumcision); *you have fallen from grace* (unmerited pardon for one's sins) (Gal. 5:4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The primary problem that the Jewish religious leaders had was they relied on the "deeds of the law", associated with sacrificing animals and other related ordinances to justify their sinful behavior (cf. Rom. 3:20, 28). Instead, they needed to understand that it was Christ's "deed" that would allow them to be forgiven and inherit everlasting life. In reality, it was Christ's shed

blood that fulfilled the law of animal sacrifice, which the following statement confirms.

*Do not think that I (Christ) came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but **to fulfill** (Mt. 5:17; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

Therefore, if there are scriptures that appear to claim God's law is no longer applicable, be warned, this is not the case at all. For those foolish or deceived enough to believe this, it should be perfectly acceptable to murder people, commit adultery with your neighbor's wife, move his landmark, etc.

So do not be deceived into believing that the phrase "Law of Moses" only refers to God's law and commandments. In fact, it is often addressing the animal sacrificial system specifically, as the following scriptures confirm.

*Also Jehoiada appointed the oversight of the house of the Lord to the hand of the priests, the Levites, whom David had assigned in the house of the Lord, **to offer the burnt offerings of the Lord, as it is written in the Law of Moses...** (2Chron. 23:18a; emphasis added).*

*Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, **to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses** the man of God (Ezra 3:2; emphasis added).*

*Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man (Christ) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹and by him everyone who believes (what Christ taught, including repentance of sin) is justified from all things **from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses** (specifically, the ordinances associated with animal*

sacrifices) (Ac. 13:39; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The apostle Paul clarified this further.

*For the law (pertaining to animal sacrifices), having a shadow of the good things to come (through Christ's shed blood), and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect (because they were a temporary measure only; waiting for Christ to come and shed his blood). ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged (cleansed of sin), would have had no more consciousness of sins (no desire to sin). ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For **it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins** (remove them forever) (Heb. 10:1-3; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

Not that he (Christ) should offer himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of another ('clean' animal) – ²⁶He (Christ) then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:25-26; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In conclusion, the 'clean' animals that were sacrificed on the altar were considered 'holy' because they served as a temporary means through which a specific sin could be forgiven. However, by offering these animals every time someone committed a sin, it did not necessarily change the attitude of the sinner to the point he/she would make a determined effort to cease their sinful actions. This meant that the average sinner would have to sacrifice numerous animals over the course of their lifetime. Another reason

these animals were considered 'holy' was they foreshadowed the sacrifice of the 'Holy One', Jesus Christ, whose shed blood would remove sin once and for all. However, contrary to various teachings in Christianity, the individual who wants to have their sins forgiven and forgotten forever, must genuinely repent and then bury their old sinful way of living in the water of baptism. After this, the Holy Spirit from God the Father will be granted in order to strengthen the repentant individual's ability to resist sin. If they sin following baptism, they can ask to be forgiven and it will be granted. This is confirmed by John when he was writing to baptized members of God's church.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (cf. Ps. 119:172b). ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1Jn. 1:8-10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

*My little children, these things I write to you, **that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** ²And he himself is the propitiation (SGD 2434; atonement; covering) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1Jn. 2:1-2; emphasis added).*

In John 2:2 above, the Greek word for "world" is *kosmos*, which is inclusive of the entire universe and "the arrangement of all things". "All things" would not exclude those in the spirit realm who have sinned. They too can repent of their sin and be "covered" by the shed blood of the 'Holy One', Jesus Christ (cf. 2Pet. 3:9b).

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