

The Sacrifice

First of all, the sacrifices were designed to be so dreaded people simply would not sin, because they would not want to kill the animal. Our love for our Father, God, was supposed to be such that we would kill this precious thing, which meant so much to us, in order to demonstrate to Him we were truly ashamed of our bad actions. This is the disciplinary aspect of the sacrificial system. There are four other aspects of the sacrificial system. These are love, practicality, symbolism, and prophesy. Each of these aspects will be addressed here.

We will not delve into all of the details of the actual sacrifices. Those who are interested in doing so can find the details in Leviticus. Here are some facts concerning the sacrificial system:

1. The person who committed the sin requiring the sacrifice was the one who was required to kill and dismember the animal to be sacrificed in most cases. The priest then took the parts to perform the ceremony.
2. Not all sacrifices were animals.
3. A "meat" offering was not what we call meat today. A "meat" offering was a tribute or a gift to God. It was usually unleavened bread made of fine flour, and oil. This was a way to show love to God and did not require the shedding of blood.
4. Animals to be sacrificed were normally males which were less than one year old (see Exodus 12:5).

The love aspect of the sacrificial system is partially demonstrated in the meat offering described in number three above. We will see an extension of the love aspect at the end of this pamphlet. Number four above demonstrates the purely practical aspect of the sacrificial system. Male animals are a mixed blessing in an agrarian society. Males are good for breeding, but only one male is needed to service many females. The meat from

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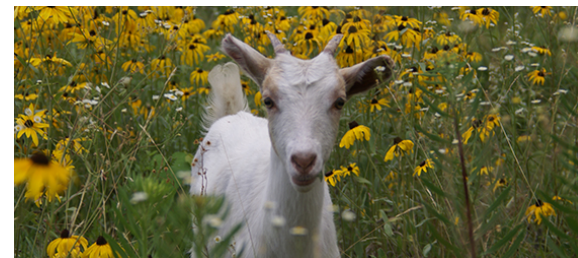
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The Sacrificial System



This informational pamphlet gives an overview of the purpose behind the sacrificial system in the Bible.



adult rams and bucks will have poor flavor and can also be tough, especially if butchered near or during the rut. Culling the males while they are young and keeping the females is desirable for the shepherd, because this allows the herd to continually grow without the risk of inbreeding. Therefore, from a purely practical standpoint, the sacrificial system supports good herd management by providing another use for the males.

Mankind did not respond appropriately to the sacrificial system. Mankind simply became accustomed to offering sacrifices rather than staying far from sin. Mankind completely missed the point of the sacrificial system. The Bible tells us many times God took no delight in sacrifice in lieu of obedience.

Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Here God tells us he was tired of all the sacrificing. He goes on to say He will not even hear the prayers of those who sacrifice instead of being obedient.

Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Isa 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Isa 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Isa 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isa 1:19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

Isaiah 1:18 above uses the colors of scarlet, red, and crimson to symbolize blood and death. These colors, and the symbolism, go hand-in-hand with the premise of the sacrificial system. The premise is those guilty of sin deserve death, but they are spared and cleansed by a sacrificial lamb. The sacrifices were a shadow of things to come. The sacrifices were symbolic and prophetic. If we turn again to Isaiah 1:18, we see the terms "white as snow" and "as wool" used to describe the taking away of sins. This is symbolic of Christ who is often portrayed as a lamb in the Bible. Again, this ties in with the sacrificial system where an innocent lamb was substituted for the guilt of a person. A verse which correlates well with these scriptures is John 1:29. In this verse, John the Baptist tells us Jesus is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the whole world. This is where our hope comes from. This is the good news. Christ has substituted himself for our guilt. The symbolism of the sacrificial system has come to fruition in Christ. This demonstrates the prophetic and symbolic aspects of the sacrificial system. The entire point of the sacrificial system is to show us Christ will forgive our sins if we simply follow Him and live righteously. The sacrificing of an animal was supposed to be a dreaded thing. It was supposed to give us an idea of how it would feel to God if He were to kill one of us. We are His children. He does not want to destroy us. We were meant to have everlasting life. We are also meant to be obedient to Him. A parent takes no pleasure in disciplining a child. The parent disciplines the child for the benefit of the child. The same principle applies to the sacrificial system. God took no pleasure in it. God put it in place for the benefit of His children. His children became accustomed to the killing though. His children sacrificed in lieu of being obedient. God then sent a greater sacrifice. A sacrifice which should be more important to us than any animal. A sacrifice so important to us we would surely be obedient. He

sent His Son. He sent a part of Himself to atone for our sins. Our sin is covered by His sacrifice when we transgress His law which was put in place for our benefit. The flip side of that sentiment is we are a little more responsible for His death on that cross every time we sin. Our part in His suffering is increased every time we are disobedient to Him. He has taken our place. It is through His stripes we are healed of our transgressions. Perhaps this is why He told us "If ye love me, keep my commandments" in John 14:15. This is the extension of the love aspect of the sacrificial system. We must not be like all of those generations who sacrificed in lieu of obedience. They continued to sin and then made sacrifices to atone for their sin. However, this practice was unacceptable to God as we have seen. We must not willfully sin thinking Christ has already paid the price for that sin. We must not claim grace in lieu of obedience. These next verses make this abundantly clear.

Heb 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, Heb 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Heb 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Heb 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Therefore, let us be obedient. Let us keep all of His commandments.

1Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.