

DOES GOD STILL DESIRE A SACRIFICE?

Genesis 22

- Sacrifice is a very old idea in worship. We might even say that there is no true worship without it.
- We see the rite of sacrifice demonstrated in the beginning of the Bible with the sons of Adam. The practice was clearly approved by God. Later in the Bible we see that Noah offered sacrifices, and so did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Job and his friends also offered sacrifices.
- The concept of sacrifice was later a part of the Law given to Moses, and various types of sacrifices are detailed for us in the early chapters of Leviticus. Certainly, our fathers had one thing in common. They all built altars to God and they all made sacrifices.
 - A. For the most part, sacrifices required shedding the blood of lambs, of goats, of calves, etc.
 - B. The shedding of blood speaks of a very big problem in man's approach or access to God. This is illustrated by Cain's offering of the fruit of the field. His offering did not suffice and he was not accepted by God. His brother Abel, on the other hand, offered a blood sacrifice and was accepted. The Bible tells us that he offered in faith ([Heb. 11:4](#)). He was, no doubt, looking forward to a future Messiah and a future sacrifice that would permanently solve the sin problem.
 - C. In biblical times both the Tabernacle and the Temple taught much concerning this subject. Inside these beautiful structures, communion with the true God was possible. The arrangement of both of these structures was a picture of spiritual progress.
 - i. One came into the outer court, then into the inner court and finally into the Holy of Holies where God dwelt. Only the chosen priest could enter there, and not without blood.
 - ii. It is significant that as one entered the outer court he was confronted immediately with an altar. This altar blocked the way into the presence of God, which could be experienced within. Although in ancient times animals of many types were offered on this altar, it was clearly necessary for a better offering to be made. The mere fact that animal sacrifices had to be repeated raised questions as to their efficacy ([Heb. 10:1-4](#))
- A. As Christians we believe that Jesus, the God-man, was that perfect sacrifice who was offered once for all for the sins of all mankind ([Heb. 10:14](#); [Isa. 53:10](#)).
- B. We believe that Psalm [40:6-8](#) speaks of this offering in these words: *"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'"*

- C. One of the important Hebrew words for offering has the root *ka-rav*.
- i. The root word also means "to come near" or "to approach." Quite literally we cannot come near to God without sacrifice.
 - ii. Even the word for the offering itself, *kar-ban*, is a derivative of this root. With the whole idea of sacrifice as the approach to God so deeply ingrained in the Bible, it is amazing we could have almost lost this concept in our modern world.
1. We try to approach God in many ways.
 2. We often try to make ourselves presentable to him by our finery or by our long prayers or other means.
 3. We try to "clean ourselves up" to approach him.
 4. We forget that in God's order of things, the altar comes first and the laver for washing comes second.
 5. We do not wash up before meeting God.
 6. First there must be the blood sacrifice, and then God washes us through regeneration and through his Word (**Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:26**).
 7. It is clear that we cannot really make this blood sacrifice.
 8. It was made for us long ago in the death of Jesus.

THE PRINCIPLES OF SACRIFICE

Question - What are some other things involved in sacrifice?

1. One very important principle is that God must be first in everything.
 - a. Several offerings of Israel illustrate this fact, such as the offerings of the first-born and the first-fruit. The best had to be given to God, even before the Israelite farmer could have a taste.
 - b. The first pressing of the olives had to go to God's temple for the *menorah*. When fruit trees were planted, one had to wait three years before harvesting the fruit, and then in the fourth year all the fruit had to be given to God (**Lev. 19:23-25**). It was God's way of teaching his people patience and faith.
 - c. Also, imagine waiting in anticipation for the cow to have a calf and then realizing that this precious firstborn had to be offered to God as a burnt offering.
2. The religion of the Old Testament was a costly religion. King David once said, "***I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing***" (**2 Sam.24:24**).
3. Today in our giving we strain to reach the tithe or 10 percent. Old Testament religion started at this point. After the tithe there was the Sabbatical Year.
 - a. When one lived in an agricultural society and didn't farm his land one year out of every seven that is effectively another 14.2 percent offered up to God. This does not consider that on the Sabbatical, all Hebrew slaves were freed and all debts to fellow Hebrews were canceled (**Deut. 15:1, 12**).

- b. If one did not harvest the corners of his fields or go back for second pickings, so that the poor could glean (**Lev. 19:9**), there is possibly another 5-10 percent.
 - c. For those who kept the Sabbath, that lost day of production could amount to another 14.2 percent.
 - d. Then there was the year of Jubilee every 50 years. At that time all property reverted back to its original family ownership and all Hebrew servants were set free. That might amount to another 2-10 percent, depending upon how wealthy a family happened to be.
 - e. Of course, we are already getting up into the area of 50-60 percent of total income offered to God. All this does not count the offerings.
 - f. There were the offerings of the first-born and first-fruits that we have mentioned. Plus, all males were required to go up to Jerusalem three times each year (**Ex. 23:17**), and they were forbidden to appear before the Lord empty (**Deut. 16:16**).
 - g. They had to bring animals from their flocks each time. Then there were the whole offerings, cereal offerings, drink offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings (**Lev. 1-5**). All these offerings could easily total up to another 5-10 percent of a family's income.
4. It immediately becomes apparent that sacrifice brings out real faith. Unlike the heathen all around them, the Israelites had to live by faith.
 5. They were constantly selecting their best animals, even choice breeding stock to offer to God, while the heathen were hoarding theirs and attempting to increase their flocks. Strangely in the end, it was the Hebrews whose flocks increased until they were the envy of all their neighbors.
 6. Perhaps this helps us understand why early Christians were selling farms and houses and giving 100 percent of the proceeds to the apostles. They did not expect to be penniless and homeless because God had also commanded hospitality. They knew that God would supply all their needs according to his riches in glory through Christ (**Phil. 4:19**).

WHAT SACRIFICES CAN WE STILL MAKE

- The concept of sacrifice has not passed away.
 - Real religion still demands it.
- A. In response to the all important sacrifice of Christ, which was made once for all for our salvation, there are some sacrifices we can make.
 1. There is our sacrifice of thanksgiving (**Psa. 116:17**).
 2. Then there are the sacrifices of prayer and praise (**Heb. 13:15; Psa. 50:23**).
 3. There is the sacrifice of our gifts (**Phil 4:18**)
 4. The sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart (**Psa. 51:17**).

5. Finally, there is the concept of the whole life offered up to God as seen in **Romans 12:1-2**: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."*

- If we want to know how meaningful our religion is, we should count up what it is costing us, and that will be a good indicator.
 - When religion gets stale, the lack of sacrifice is often the problem. There are times when we need to just recklessly offer something to God - something that is really precious to us.
- A. We must be careful never to give with the selfish idea of receiving, but when we sacrifice, we do in a sense trust God to replace what is given, in his own time and in his own way of course.
- B. Somehow, when we give to God we are able to strangely retain what is given and have the increase and the blessing too.
- C. It's amazing! Martin Luther once said *"I have held many things in my hands, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."*
- D. The author of Proverbs says something very similar: *"One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty"* (Prov.11:24).
- Like our fathers of old we need to get into the practice of building altars everywhere we go and offering our precious things upon them.
 - Abraham did this regularly. It is our altars that break open the heavens for us, for our children, and for others around us.
 - I personally feel that it was the result of Abraham's sacrifice in **Genesis 12:8**, that Jacob was able to see heaven opened in **Genesis 28:10-15**. Both events occurred at exactly the same spot, with only time separating them.
 - In **Leviticus 6:9, 12, and 13**, we see that the fire must never be allowed to go out on God's altar. His altar is never to be without sacrifice.
 - Let us keep the fires kindled. It will bring us a warmer, more blessed relationship with the Creator!