

SABBATH THOUGHT 2024-04-06—SACRIFICE FOR SIN

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

“All have sinned¹ and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Those simple words describe the defect in every human heart beginning with Adam and Eve. The problem is that sin causes an insurmountable gulf between the sinner and God². Not only that, but “the wages of sin is **death**” (Rom. 3:23); that is, the death of the *sinner*.

This is a world in which everyone will be dead because of sin, and that is a real concern for God who desires all to receive the gift of eternal life³. To avoid having to kill everyone, God initially instituted animal sacrifices in which a sinner would confess their sin over an animal and then sacrifice it for the purpose of covering the sin with the blood. Great! Now those who repent can avoid death. But animals are not a complete solution because there remained a problem:

HEBREWS 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

When it came to sin, the Law demanded the blood of the SINNER so the sacrifice of an innocent animal did not eliminate sin. Only the blood of the sinner is acceptable. Concerning animal sacrifices, Paul said:

HEBREWS 9:8-10 the Holy Spirit indicating this, **that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest [made apparent] while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience— 10 concerned** only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

Because animal blood does not remove sin, there could be no access to the mercy seat inside the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Though it was simply an earthly *representation* of the heavenly reality, animal sacrifices did not allow someone access even to the SYMBOLS of God’s throne much less bridge the separation with God in heaven. So what was the purpose of animal sacrifices if they did not remove sin and grant people access to Him?

HEBREWS 9:13-14 For if **the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,** 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works** to serve the living God?

¹ “Sin is the transgressions of [God’s] Law.” (1 John 3:4).

² Isa. 59:2.

³ John 3:16.

The blood of animals only purified or cleansed the flesh. It did NOT “cleanse your conscience;” that is, it failed to bring REMISSION of sin, which is a pardon from guilt and a release from death. Animal sacrifices NEVER absolved the death penalty for a sinner so people were obviously still separated from God. Animal sacrifices accomplished one thing only—purification (cleansing) of the flesh.

But that still does not answer the question of why God instituted animal sacrifices if they were for purification only. The answer is that the first covenant was established by the blood of animals, which was limited to blessings of physical life. In it, the people did not have direct access to God and, consequently, there remained a gulf between them. This is why Paul said:

HEBREWS 9:22-23 And according to the law **almost all things are purified with [animal] blood, and without shedding of blood [of the sinner] there is no remission [of sin].** 23 Therefore *it was* necessary that **the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these,** but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Animal blood was sufficient for everything in the first covenant—including the *purification* of sin—because the first covenant did NOT eliminate DEATH. Those under the first covenant received promises of blessings of a physical life but they still DIED under that covenant. It was not one of eternal life; therefore, the penalty of death for sin still existed.

God’s plan of eternal life for mankind obviously needed something that went beyond purification to bring REMISSION of sin but THAT required a human blood sacrifice. Clearly, the alternative to animals was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But how was His life in the flesh the solution to sin? The answer to that requires understanding how Jesus Christ BECAME a sacrificial offering. It all began when God the Father laid the sins of mankind upon Him:

ISAIAH 53:5-12 But He [*Jesus Christ*] was wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And **the LORD [God the Father] has laid on Him [Jesus Christ] the iniquity of us all.** ... For **He was cut off** from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My [*God’s*] people He was stricken. 9 And they **made His [Jesus Christ’s] grave with the wicked**— But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When **You [God the Father] make His [Jesus Christ’s] soul an offering for sin,** He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. 11 He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My [*God’s*] Righteous Servant [*Jesus Christ*] shall justify many, For **He [Jesus Christ] shall bear their iniquities.** 12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because **He [God the Father] poured out His [Jesus Christ’s] soul**

unto death, And He [Jesus Christ] was numbered with the transgressors⁴, And He [Jesus Christ] bore the sin of many, And **made intercession for the transgressors.**

The result was that Jesus Christ was made sin:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 For **He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us**, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

However, Jesus was not literally *made* into sin. Instead, Jesus was made a SACRIFICE for sin when God laid the sins of the world upon Him⁵ and then had Him killed:

HEBREWS 10:5-10, 23-28 Therefore, when He [Jesus Christ] came into the world, He said: **“[Animal] Sacrifice and offering You [God] did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me [to be offered].** 6 In [animal] burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You [God] had no pleasure [were not pleased]. 7 Then I [Jesus Christ] said, ‘Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’ ” 8 Previously [or, ‘Again’] saying, “[Animal] Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You [God] did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), 9 then He [Jesus Christ] said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first [that is, animal sacrifices] that He may establish the second [the sacrifice of Jesus Christ]. 10 By that will we have been sanctified through **the offering of the body of Jesus Christ** once for all. ... 23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves **with better sacrifices than these [the animal sacrifices].** 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 **not that He should offer Himself often**, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— 26 He 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.** 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so **Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.** ...

When Jesus died with the sins of the world on Him, He became the human blood sacrifice that would satisfy the Law that requires death for sinners. But how does someone have that sacrifice APPLIED to their sins? Jesus clearly VOLUNTEERED to be the human blood sacrifice for the sins of mankind, as is evident when He said, **“I have come to do Your will, O God”** (vv. 7, 9)⁶. But that does not mean that the Judge of mankind—God the Father—is REQUIRED to apply that sacrifice to anyone. In other words, the blood of Jesus Christ is absolute remission of sin but it is not *automatically* applied to every sinner.

⁴ Jesus was crucified between two other men—Mark 15:28.

⁵ Also Heb. 9:28.

⁶ Also John 10:15-18.

What is required for God the Father to apply the blood of Jesus Christ to someone's sins? Faith, repentance, and baptism! Why faith? One must BELIEVE that His blood is remission of sin AND that God the Father will forgive it:

1 JOHN 1:9 **If we confess our sins, He [God the Father] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But there also has to be repentance, which is the humble and contrite⁷ confession of sin. This was reflected in animal sacrifices when sins were confessed over the animal. Even though the sins of the world were upon Jesus before His death, a sinner must still confess their OWN sins⁸:

MATTHEW 3:6 and were **baptized** by him in the Jordan, **confessing their sins**.

In the animal sacrifices, sins were confessed over the head of the animal and then the SINNER killed the animal. But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is different. When someone confesses their sin to God, the sacrifice for sin—Jesus Christ—had already died. So a sinner cannot actually kill the sin sacrifice (Jesus Christ). Instead, the sinner must symbolically die by joining with Jesus Christ in HIS death since He has already been sacrificed. This happens through baptism wherein the sinner 'dies' in a grave of water⁹:

ROMANS 6:2-5 Certainly not! How shall **we who died to sin** live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that **as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death**? 4 Therefore **we were buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if **we have been united together in the likeness of His death**, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection,

God the Father applies the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ to those who confess their sins with heartfelt remorse and die for their sins by being joined in the death of Jesus Christ. In other words, remission of sins is by faith, repentance, and baptism. The final act of baptism is being raised out of that watery grave, picturing the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

ROMANS 6:2-11 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly **we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection**, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body

⁷ Isa. 57:15.

⁸ 1 John 1:9.

⁹ Also Col. 2:12.

of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now **if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead,** dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but **the life that He lives, He lives to God.** 11 Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves** to be dead indeed to sin, but **alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

After baptism, a person is a NEW CREATION¹⁰ dedicated to Jesus Christ LIVING in them¹¹. The gulf between mankind and God is bridged by FAITH in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and the forgiveness of God, sincere and heartfelt REPENTANCE of sin, DYING through baptism into the death of Jesus Christ, and finally being RAISED unto a physical life of serving God and Jesus Christ and having promises of eternal life.

The first covenant was established by the blood of animals who are dead so the promises do not go beyond physical life. The second covenant was established by the blood of Jesus Christ who was resurrected and is alive in heaven so it is one of *eternal* spirit life. Life after baptism is a new physical life seeded with the Holy Spirit of eternity. This new life is under the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ¹², enduring in obedience to God's Law, repentance of sin, and growing in agape love. So why did animal sacrifices exist at all?

ROMANS 3:25-26 ... because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed [BEFORE the sacrifice of Jesus], 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He [*God the Father*] might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus [*Christ's sacrifice*].

Purification under animal sacrifices portrayed the remission of sin under the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He also "made the first [*covenant*] obsolete" (Heb. 8:13) because His blood established the New Covenant of eternal life. At last, the gulf is bridged and mankind can enter into the Holy of Holies before God and Jesus Christ!

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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¹⁰ 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15.

¹¹ Also Gal. 2:20; Phil 1:21.

¹² Heb. 9:28; 10:1, 10.