

The Death Of Christ: Fulfillment of the Old Testament Sacrifices

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Christianity is not a new religion but a historical manifestation of an eternal purpose, which was ordained in heaven. This is evident in such Scriptures as Rev 13:8 "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." 1 Peter 1:19-20 "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." Other Scriptures include Exodus 12:3,6, Titus 1:2, Eph. 1:4 and Acts 2:23. In the Old Testament sacrificial system an animal without blemish or spot was required in order to make a sacrifice to the Lord for the forgiveness of sin or for a worship or devotion offering. Exodus 12:3,6 reveals that during Passover every man of the nation of Israel was to take a lamb without blemish or spot for his family, referred to as the Passover lamb, a type which points to Christ as our perfect Lamb without blemish or spot. He was to take this lamb on the tenth day and keep it until the fourteenth day, at which time the lamb would be sacrificed. All who partook in this Passover sacrifice would be passed over by God when He sent His wrath.

In the New Testament, Christ's death puts an end to the Old Testament sacrificial system for He is the perfect Lamb without spot and without blemish. John the Baptist knew that Jesus would be the sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the world for He says in John 1:29 "... Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" and again in verse 36 "...Look the Lamb of God!" The Bible is clear that Jesus was not "created" to be the sacrifice but rather He was before the foundation of the world was. John 1:1,14,17 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The Apostle Paul gives the Jews an example from Israel's history that Christ was with them even during the time of the desert wanderings. Romans 10:3-4 "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that spiritual rock was Christ."

Through these scriptures and the Apostle Paul's words, it is evident that Christianity is not a new religion, however the Old Testament sacrifices are types pointing to the ultimate sacrifice and atonement that was accomplished through the death of Christ. **"Before the creation of the world, He who knows the end from the beginning had made provision for man's redemption."** (Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*, p.186)

The Mosaic sacrifices consisted of two kinds, animal (also referred to as bloody sacrifices) and vegetable (also referred to as non-bloody sacrifices). The most important of these sacrifices was the animal or bloody sacrifice, which consists of four types; sin offering, guilt offering, burnt offering and the peace offering. These sacrifices served a specific purpose, "The purpose was not just to create communion between God and man; rather, the "sacrifice" represented the principle that, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Lev 17:11; cf. Heb.9: 22.)" (Vine, Unger and White, *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p.210) All of the Old Testament sacrifice point forward to and are a type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:9,10) symbolized by His Body and His Blood (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

The sin offering is the most important of all sacrifices in the Mosaic system. This sacrifice made atonement for the individual person when they sinned unintentionally or did what was forbidden in any of the Lord's commands (Lev 4:2). The idea is that some sins are unintentional and were committed through ignorance, hurry, lack of consideration, or carelessness, as opposed to the sins which are deliberate and knowingly done in rebellion

against God and the commandments He set for all people to follow. Even though these sins were unintentional, that did not free the person from the guilt of the sin or from the wrath of God and therefore the sin offering was essential. The effect of the sin offering was forgiveness of the sin (Lev 4:20,26,31,35; 5:10; 12:8; 14:20; 16:19). In the New Testament Jesus Christ atoned for the believer's sin (Heb 13:12), He stood in the sinners place as his substitute and He is shown as actually burdened with the believer's sin. Isaiah 53:12 gives a good example of typology for the sin offering and Christ bearing the sins of the people. "...because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12b). 1 Peter 2:24 "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.

The trespass offering was another atoning sacrifice, quite like the sin offering however the trespass offering was made for a special offense rather than for an individual. This offering was to make atonement for the mishandling the holy things of the Lord that is treating the holy things as if they were common instead of holy. "When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the Lord's holy things, he is to bring to the Lord as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering" (Lev. 5:15). "The word "unintentionally" is the same one used in reference to the sin offering. It refers to "straying" or "erring" from the commands of the Lord, in this case specifically the commands about "the Lord's holy things" (i.e., the things dedicated to the Lord for the tabernacle or priesthood). (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p.578) "In fact, the trespass offering may be regarded as representing ransom for a special wrong, while the sin offering symbolized general redemption." (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, p.100ff)

In addition to be forgiven by offering sacrifice, the offender would also have to make restitution to the person that he wronged. If the offender wronged the Lord by mishandling the holy things, he is to make restitution by offering the sacrifice and add a fifth of the value to that which he defiled and give it to the priest (Lev 5:16). If the offender deceived or stole from his neighbor, he is to return what was stolen, extorted, lost, was entrusted to him or whatever he swore falsely about. He was to make restitution in full, adding one fifth of the value to the owner on the same day he made his guilt offering to the priest (Lev 6:1-7).

The trespass offering is a type pointing to Christ's atoning for the damage caused by sin. Christ is not atoning for the guilt of sin as in the sin offering, rather the specific damage caused by the sin. Psalm 51:4 shows this aspect of the trespass offering "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge." The same principle is shown in the parable of the Lost Son told by Jesus "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son'" (Luke 15:22). The atoning work of Christ is symbolized in the father's response in Luke 15:23,24 "Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found..." Through the atoning work of Christ we are alive and not dead to sin, we were lost in our sin and shame but now are found and renewed into a right standing with God.

The burnt offering was offered every morning and every evening at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and was done for the whole nation of Israel (Exodus 29:38-42). The burnt offering was not atonement for sin but was made as an act of worship and dedication to the Lord. This offering had to be a male animal but could be of the herd (Lev 1:3), the flock (Lev 1:10) or birds (Lev 1:14). The whole offering was burnt upon the altar with the exception of the skins, and the aroma was pleasing to the Lord (Lev 1:9).

The burnt offering is a type pointing to Christ as the perfect sacrifice without spot or blemish. Unlike the sin and trespass offering where Christ was carrying the burden of sin, Christ is seen as a pleasing sacrifice unto the Lord. "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him" (Col 1:19). The Lord speaks this of Jesus at His baptism "And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17). Christ died perfect, never giving in to temptation (Matt 4:1-11) and blameless even before man at His trial (Matt 27:19). Hebrews 9:14a also states that Christ offered Himself unblemished to God.

The peace offering (also known as the fellowship offering) was the only offering where the offerer would eat a part of the offering (Lev.7: 15). This offering was a voluntary act of worship, thanksgiving and fellowship. The elements of this offering was any animal without defect from the herd or the flock and a variety of breads, since this offering included a communal meal. The peace offerings always followed any other sacrifice that was taking place. The most holy of these offerings was the two lambs sacrificed every year at the Pentecost (Lev. 23:19).

The peace offering is a type of Christ making peace between God and man through His death. "For He Himself is our peace..." Eph. 2:14), "and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross" (Col 1:20). The communal meal is a type pointing to the Last Supper held between Christ and His disciples (Luke 22:19,20) and the sacrament of breaking bread we partake in these times. Through His broken body and shed blood we have peace with God.

Although the Old Testament sacrifices were good, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross was better. In the Mosaic sacrificial system, the sacrifice provided a covering for the person's sin and resulted in forgiveness by God, however the sacrifice failed in the fact that it did nothing to redeem the soul of the offerer. "At best the sacrifices were a temporary and imperfect means of covering sin until a more perfect redemption should come" (Pearlman, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible, p.192). Christ's death however served a bigger purpose and that was to bring about the redemption of souls. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Gal 3:13). "For this reason Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance –now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15).

"Animal sacrifices are described as "carnal ordinances," that is, rites which removed bodily defilements, and atoned for the outward acts of sin (Heb 9:10) but contained no spiritual virtue within themselves" (Pearlman, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible, p.192). "This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-external regulations applying until the time of the new order" (Heb 9:9,10). Christ's death removed sin and atoned for the whole man, inner and outer. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Cor. 5:17-19a).

The repetition and the frequency with which the animal sacrifices had to be made reveal that these Mosaic sacrifices were imperfect. "The law is only a shadow of good things that are coming-not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship" (Heb 10:1). Christ on the other hand, provided a perfect sacrifice, which was required only once, and in that One sacrifice, abolished sin. "...But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him" (Heb 9:26b-28).

The priests offering the animal sacrifice were themselves imperfect. They had to offer sacrifices for their own sin first and then they were able to offer up sacrifices for the sins of the people. In addition, these priests were subject to the same death as those they offered up sacrifices for (Heb. 7:23). Christ however was holy, blameless and pure. He needed not to offer up sacrifices for His own sin, for He was holy and perfect in every way, therefore He is the perfect sacrifice for our sin (Heb. 7:26,27). Christ lives forever and is no subject to death, for He conquered death. By conquering death He has a permanent priesthood, and therefore we have a high priest that is living and continually intercedes for us (Heb. 7:24,25).

The central aspect of Christ's death on the cross was atonement. He accomplished this by offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice in order to remove the guilt of our sins. John the Baptist proclaimed this when he saw Jesus approaching "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In order for Him to remove our guilt of sin, it was necessary for Him to bear all the guilt for our sins and the full penalty we deserved, in this, Christ became our substitute. "Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He 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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:4-6). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). "Christ also suffered for us...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-by whose stripes you are healed" (1 Peter 2:21,24). Only Christ could provide this atonement, for He was sinless and perfectly holy.

As Jesus died on the cross, He not only removed the guilt of sin but also the judgment and wrath that sin warranted. By removing the guilt of sin and sin's penalty Jesus propitiated or satisfied God's justice. Propitiation means that Jesus eliminated God's wrath against sin. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also the whole world" (1 John 2:2). God sent His only Son into the world to save the world from His wrath. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:1). Christ had all God's wrath put on Him to spare us so that we could be considered children of God rather than children of wrath.

Myer Pearlman makes reference to the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25:10-22, when speaking of propitiation. "The reference is to the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10- 22), which was composed of two parts: first the Ark, representing the throne of Israel's righteous Ruler, and containing the tables of the law as the expression of His righteous will; second, the cover or the lid, known as the mercy seat, surmounted by angelic figures known as Cherubim. Two outstanding lessons were conveyed by this piece of furniture: first, the tables of law taught that God was a righteous God who would not pass by sin and who must enforce His decrees and punish the wicked. But how could a sinful nation live in His sight? The mercy seat, which covered the law, was the place where blood was sprinkled once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people. It was the place of the covering of sin, and taught the lesson that God who is righteous can consistently pardon sin because of an atoning sacrifice. By means of atoning blood, that which is a throne of judgment becomes a throne of grace" (Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*, p.205-206).

When Christ died on the cross He died as our substitute. He came down from heaven and took on human form, endured temptation and all that humanity experiences and yet He never sinned. Therefore he provided for us a perfect, unblemished, unspotted substitute. He was not only a perfect sacrifice in our place but He was able to identify with mankind for He Himself had become flesh. In the Old Testament sacrifices, the person was to bring their offering and place their hand upon the head of the animal before it was slaughtered, this signified the substitutionary nature of the sacrifice (Lev 1-6), this is a type pointing to Christ's work in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:24; Isa. 53:4-6). "...now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb. 9:15b).

When the Bible speaks of the redemption brought about by the death of Christ and His suffering on the cross, it is referring to the release from the bondage and penalty of sin. This release was not free however, this release was bought with a price and that price was His death on the cross. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18,19). "The most interesting illustration of redemption is found in the Old Testament law of the kinsman-redeemer. Lev.25: 47-49. According to this

law, a man who had sold his property and sold himself into servitude because of debt could regain both his land and his liberty at any time by a man possessing the following qualifications: first, he must be kin to the man; second, he must be willing to redeem or buy back; third, he must have the price. The Lord Jesus measured up to all three qualifications: He became kin to us by taking our nature; He was willing to give up all to redeem us (2 Cor. 8:9), and being Divine He was able to pay the price- His own precious blood" (Pearlman, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible, p.208)

In summary, the Mosaic Law did well in bringing people into an awareness of sin and the sacrifices did their part in bringing about the forgiveness of the sin and suppressing the wrath of God. However, those sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice that came in the New Testament in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came in the flesh to become the perfect, unblemished and unspotted sacrifice that took away the guilt of sins from all who believe. Christ provided what the Mosaic sacrifices couldn't, a once and for all, non-repetitive sacrifice.

Christ's death brought about atonement, which took away the sin of man from the sight of God. As long as a person believes on Christ and follows the commands set forth by Him, we can be assured that our sin has been atoned for, we have been forgiven, and our sins have been blotted out. Christ also provided propitiation and therefore God's wrath does not burn against us. God justice is satisfied through the death of His one and only Son, whom He sent into this world to suffer and die so that we may be saved. Christ became our substitute, so that He may take away our sin and therefore we yet live. In becoming our substitute He took on the burdens of our sins as well as the entire penalty that we ourselves deserved. He also redeemed us; He paid the price and bought us back with His own blood that we could be brought back into a right relationship with God. He fulfilled the types that the Old Testament writings pointed to. A sacrifice, a Messiah, and a permanent High Priest who is always able to intercede for us.