

NEW TESTAMENT SACRIFICES

by

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The day of sacrifices has NOT COME TO AN END! Whaaaaat! some will say. Am I saying it is still time to literally slit the throats of animals and offer them as sacrifices to the Lord? No, I did not say that.

Even a casual, not so serious, reader of the Bible, knows that the Old Testament has lots of instructions and comments regarding a "sacrificial system" that the ancient peoples of Israel had to follow as part of their national governmental structure and way of religious life.

Various animals and grain offerings were part of the daily life for the *priesthood* of national Israel to offer to the Eternal God. It was a very elaborate system. To be carried out in one central location. Many verses and chapters of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are devoted to expounding all the details of how these *sacrifices* were to be carried out.

The people of Israel were to offer the VERY BEST of the flocks and herds, and grain to the Lord.

Think for a moment, try to put yourself in the shoes of the farmers and ranchers back in those days, before 70 A.D. when the whole sacrificial system came to an end at the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the armies of Rome under Titus.

You had a tithing law that stated not only one tenth of your increase from your flocks, herds, and grain, was to go to the Lord, but it was to be the **very best!**

True, the Eternal God is not only the **one and only God** but is also THE BEST of anything in the universe, so offering to Him only the best makes a lot of sense. I have the skill of being able to make shoes. If I was to give a gift of a pair of shoes to say, Prince Phillip or Queen Elizabeth, would I not give them the very best pair of shoes I could possibly make? Sure I would! So giving the best of your flocks and grain to the Lord is not so far out to the farmer.

Yet, for a farmer to have a **prized** healthy, blemishless animal to breed from is something to be treasured. For they know that to have good strong healthy flocks you must have parent animals that are themselves healthy and strong - from good stock comes good stock. Sick weak animals do not generally produce *prize winning* offspring. For a farmer to **give up prized** livestock and grain is no small "sacrifice" as we use the word in a metaphorical sense.

In that sense of the word then, SACRIFICES by the people of God have **always been and will always be offered while physical humans are on this earth!**

Yes, since 70 A.D. the literal offering of literal animals in sacrifice at a temple by a physical priesthood, has come to an end. BUT the New Testament makes it *plain* that the days of *sacrifices*, in another sense, did not end in 70 A.D. For the Bible speaks of sacrifices that do not pertain to animals or grain or fruits, and those sacrifices continue as they always have for the children of God.

SACRIFICES FOR TODAY

There is a meaning to the word "sacrifice" that is very much applicable for New Testament Christians.

In part the World Book Dictionary gives this meaning to *sacrifice*: ".....**2.a**a giving up of one thing for another; destruction or surrender of something valued or desired for the sake of a higher object or more pressing claim....."

It is written: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in OBEYING the voice of the Lord? Behold, to OBEY is better than sacrifice, and to HEED than the fat of rams. For *rebellion* is as the sin of witchcraft, and *stubbornness* is as iniquity and idolatry"(1 Samuel 15:22,23).

Every kind of literal sacrifice, whether it be of animals, grain, fruit, giving up your money, your home, your automobile, exotic vacation, giving up cigarette smoking, working 80 hours a week, and other such things that may have an outward show of piety, is to no avail in acquiring God's favour UNLESS THE HEART IS IN ACCORD WITH THE LORD.

And that means the heart and mind must have *repented of sin* (the breaking of the law of God - 1 John 3:4; Romans 7:7) and with *humility* is now willing to OBEY and HEED the words and truth of the living God.

For the Lord says: ".....on *this one* will I look; on him who is poor and of a **contrite spirit**, and who **trembles at My word**"(Isaiah 66:2).

Jesus said that man was not to live by bread alone but by *every word of God*(Matthew 4:4).

He said: "Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be filled"(Mat.5:6).

One Bible definition of *righteousness* is found in Psalms 119:172. All of God's commandments are righteousness!

To find someone today who truly *desires, loves, wants to obey and heed* what God says and teaches him/her in ALL His word, who is willing and wanting to be *corrected*(as Jeremiah cried out - Jer.10:23,24), to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus, who *loves the truth*(2 Thes.2:10) which will set them free(John 8:32), to find this kind of mentally motivated person today is like finding a pearl of great price.

Concerning the glorious coming of the Lord, Jesus asked this question: ".....Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find **THE faith** on the earth"(Luke 18: 8, original Greek).

Yes, there will be ones on the earth that will have *the faith* when Jesus returns - they will be the ones *called* and *chosen* - the **elect** of God. They will be showing and manifesting the SACRIFICE of

ahumble, teachable, repentant, obedient heart and mind to all the word of the Lord.

As the Psalmist has written: "The *sacrifices* of God are a **broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart** - These, O God, You will not despise"(Ps.51:17).

If you are not sure about what the word of God teaches concerning HUMILITY, REAL REPENTANCE, and SAVING FAITH, then please request the **in-depth** study articles by those names. Also you may like to request the article called SAVED BY GRACE. It will make the truth plain about the subject of *law and grace*.

Another *sacrifice* that is for all time, yesterday, today, and forever, is found in Psalms 107 and verse 22.

"Let them *sacrifice* the *sacrifice* of THANKSGIVING, and **declare His works** with *rejoicing*."

How much do you THANK the Lord? It is so easy to "take things for granted" in this physical life. Often it is not until hard times come or tragedies occur that we stop to "smell the roses along the way." Sometimes it takes a "near death" experience for many of us to realize how much we have and to be thankful for what the Lord has given us.

Oh, we may not have this or that, we may loose this or that, one or more of the five senses, this material thing, or a particular job etc. Whatever our situation is, good or bad when compared to others, it is usually true that whatever circumstance we are in there is somebody with **less** than us.

If you are a Christian, then you have MUCH to be *thankful* for. Above all else, you should be thankful that God has called and chosen you to be His child and in the *first* resurrection, which the word says is a better resurrection.

So you need every day to *sacrifice* the *sacrifice* of PRAISE and THANKSGIVING to your heavenly Father. Give Him your "thank you Father" for my *food, my clothes, my work, my home*, for your *wonderful creations* around me, for the *angels* who help and serve me, for your *word of truth and life, your holy spirit* which is your nature within me. Thank you Father for *correcting me in your love, forgiving me, for teaching* me. Thank you Father for *loving* and having *mercy* upon me, for *forgiving* me my sins. Thank you Father for sending Christ Jesus to live and die that I may have eternal life. Thank you Christ Jesus that you were willing to put aside the glory you had with the Father, and that you were willing to come as flesh and blood to live and die for the sins of the whole world. Thank you Christ that you are now acting as our High Priest - intercessor - in heaven so we can be constantly forgiven our sins and saved by your life.

Thank you Father that you have promised to send Jesus back to this earth to usher in the age to come, when all nations will come under your rule and find peace, blessings, health, and salvation in your family and Kingdom.

The New Testament also admonishes us to: "Therefore by Him let us *continually* offer the **sacrifice** of *praise* to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, *giving thanks* to His name"(Hebrews 13:15).

Thank the Lord, PRAISE the Lord, **declare His works** with REJOICING! That is a *sacrifice* for today and tomorrow!

A *sacrifice* that has always been **greater** and **more acceptable** to the Lord than any number of prize animal/grain sacrifices, is the *sacrifice* of "righteousness and **justice**"(Proverbs 21:3).

We have covered somewhat already the sacrifice of *righteousness*. I want to cover a little the sacrifice of *JUSTICE*.

The working of **justice** in day to day life involves the *use of judgment*, the use of **judging**.

Many are confused about this topic of **judging** or **justice**. They think Christians should not judge. Some think that Christians should have such an open and broad mind for everything and every person, that "love" is all they should manifest. But it is usually a "love" that is defined by the people espousing such ideas, and not by the Bible's definition. Such love is so broad-minded and open that things fall out, or as I once heard one man say: "don't be so open minded that your brains fall out."

Christians **must at times judge**. It will be inevitable. Some time, sooner or later, we shall have to use *judgment* and *justice* pertaining to this or that issue or person.

Jesus once told certain individuals that they used "carnal" - fleshly, unrighteous *judgment*. He also told others to use "righteous judgment."

There is much to say and expound on this particular *sacrifice* for today. Here is not the place.

For those who would like to know more about this important Biblical topic, please request my article called Judgment. Needless to say it is a New Testament doctrine that must be a part of a Christians life.

God's children are to be busy performing *Spiritual* sacrifices, that of the heart and mind which is translated into **obedience**.

"Coming to Him(Christ) as to a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a *spiritual* house, a *holy* priesthood, to *offer up SPIRITUAL sacrifices* acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.Therefore to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are *disobedient*....they stumble, being *disobedient to the word*....But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a *holy* nation, His own *special* people, that you may proclaim the praise of Him who called you out of *darkness* into His *marvellous light*; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, *abstain from fleshly lusts* which war against the soul, having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles.....For this is the will of God, that by *doing good* you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but *as bond-servants* of God.....that we, having died to sins, might *live for righteousness*....."(1 Peter 2:4-24).

SACRIFICES CAN BE GOOD DEEDS

With all I have said and that has been written above, we must not believe that *sacrifices* today are just something in the heart and mind only, and **not** something that can have literal tangible works, for if we do, God's word will correct us in our mistake.

Notice it, Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 16, "But do not forget to *do good* and *to share*, for with such **sacrifices** God is well pleased."

Helping, serving, giving, sharing what we have with others in whatever way fits the situation and circumstance, is classified as *sacrifices* and is well pleasing to the Lord.

Yes of course for such doing is **loving our neighbour as ourselves** and fulfilling the second of the two great commandments.

When Paul was in literal physical want at one time in his life, the brethren at Philippi came to his service. Let's read it.

"Nevertheless you have done well that you SHARED in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel.....no church *shared with me* concerning **giving and receiving** but you only. For even in Thessalonica you *sent aid once and again for my necessities*. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, *having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you*, a sweet-smelling aroma, *an acceptable SACRIFICE, WELL PLEASING TO GOD*"(Philippians 4:14-18).

We must not forget to *give and serve and share* our **lives**, our **time**, our **talents**, our **encouragement**, our **physical goods**, to our fellow man, for in so doing we offer *sacrifices* that are *well pleasing* to the Lord.

SACRIFICING - THE FULL CIRCLE

We have it all summed up for us by Paul in his letter to the churches at Rome: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you *present your bodies a LIVING SACRIFICE, holy*, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And *do not be conformed to this world*, but be you *transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that you may **prove** what is the **good and acceptable and perfect will** of God"(Romans 12:1-2).

Indeed there it is, that is the truth of the matter. The New Testament Christian is to completely *sacrifice* HIM or HER self, in heart, mind, attitude, and life, on the altar of dying to the sins of the world and living according to that which is *good and acceptable* and the *perfect will* of God.

The day of **sacrifices** IS NOT OVER!

The Eternal God wants you to *sacrifice*, He expects you to *sacrifice*! The Lord wants you to *sacrifice* **YOURSELF** to Him, in *humble repentant obedience* to **live by His every word**.

Will you do it?

If you do then one day you will hear these words from Jesus: "Well done you good and faithful servant, **enter you into the joy of your Lord**."

written July 1996 (all Biblical quotations from the NKJV)