

Bite Size Bible Study

Blood Offerings #101

By Pastor Lee

A question I had posed to me recently was “Why would God only accept blood offerings? Why blood?”

First of all I think we need to remember that when these statutes were given to the people of that culture they thought in concrete terms not abstract terms as we do today in our culture. Even in their original written language the letters were pictographic, where the letter resembled a concrete object.

Given that mindset, God created the offerings and sacrifices in the same context so that they could understand through concrete objects that represented the future coming of the Messiah. The blood sacrifices were to be a concrete picture of the suffering of Jesus, as He chose to die for the sins of all mankind.

They could see that the life was in the blood, because when a person or animal lost its blood, it was dead. A life is an abstract concept, but blood is a concrete concept. *For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life.* Leviticus 17:11

Furthermore the life (animal) had to be a perfect life, without defect. Again it represented to them in concrete terms that the Messiah would be perfect. *...where he will present his offering to Adonai — one male lamb in its first year without defect as a burnt offering, one female lamb in its first year without defect as a sin offering, one ram without defect as peace offerings,* Numbers 6:14

Sometimes the sacrificed animal was a male other times it was a female. I think that the male was probably indicating that the Messiah would be male. The female animal was worth a great deal to its owner because of its ability to increase the flock or herd. Both were an economic sacrifice to give up for a transgression one wanted to be forgiven of.

Covenants were also ratified by the loss of life. The term we use is known in the ancient world as “to cut a covenant. The animal(s) was killed cut in two and laid side by side with the blood oozing out on the ground. The oaths each party had made to the other were recited as the walked between the two pieces of the animal(s). This was a gruesome but concrete way of showing that if one did not keep his oath that this would be his fate.

God didn't take pleasure in these sacrifices, but because they would not have understood an abstract form of sacrifice at that time; He allowed it.

But as with any ritual whether it is blood sacrifice, prayer, or any other device, it often becomes a ritual with little or no cognitive component. Because of that Samuel said: *“Does Adonai take as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying what Adonai says? Surely obeying is better than sacrifice, and heeding orders than the fat of rams.* 1Samuel 15:22. We see Israel falls into this trap from time to time but often we don't see ourselves in that same trap. We need to keep it real – not a ritual.

Jesus blood covered all the sacrifices leaving no need to kill sheep, goats, birds or oxen. But the need to follow the teachings that they were in place as a remembrance is still here today. We need to be aware of our sins, and grieve over them. Not to let them run rampant in our lives, but to work to eliminate them and follow the teaching God has given us from the time of Adam to the present date. The teaching hasn't changed – the way it is presented has, because society and cultures change and hopefully for the better.

We often say that we are covered by the blood of Jesus and that through His sacrifice we have hope in the eternal. But has that saying become just another set of words to us or is there still meaning in it?

Just as the perfect unblemished sheep, goat or ox gave it's life blood for a person's sin, so to did the perfect unblemished Son of Man give His life blood for the sins of all mankind.

We have already stated that the life is in the blood and when the blood is removed from the body the body is dead. Just as the animal died in the sacrificial act; likewise Jesus died when the blood was drained from His body. The animal never returned to life – it remained dead, showing that it was an imperfect sacrifice. But, thanks be to God, Jesus was raised from the dead and lives again. Not to become another sacrifice but to be our advocate, being the intermediary between us and the Father.

His sacrifice and resurrection back to life is our hope in a future, a future in a family that is not plagued with the consequences of sin and death that requires blood sacrifices.

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