

# The Aroma of Sacrifice

The daily sacrifice in Jerusalem will be interrupted and it will mark the beginning of the great tribulation – three and a half years described by scripture as the worst time that ever has or ever will come upon the world. Why is this sacrifice such a big deal? What is it about this practice that makes it such a catalyst and hot button in the last days? What is sacrifice all about anyway? When did it start and why? Does it mean anything to us as believers or is it only a Jewish concern? What will make this practice one that must be stopped?

## All about sacrifice

**The principle of sacrifice is absolutely contrary to the principle of sin.** From the earliest days, all the way back to Abel the son of Adam, offering a sacrifice was understood to be pleasing to God. Before the giving of the Old Testament law, sacrifices were made to Him as a means of demonstrating dedication. After Moses, sacrifice took on the additional role of covering sin. Sadly, the last days church has strayed so far from this crucial understanding – that is, to live for God, to please Him and to follow Christ involves daily sacrifice!

And just as the Antichrist will hate the sacrificial worship of the temple, Satan hates the daily sacrifice evident in the life of any ardent believer – he wants it to stop also. For that reason, he has worked hard

to eliminate it from the character and conscience of the church. You see, the things we tend to esteem so highly -- big churches, so-called mega-ministries – are not necessarily a threat to his kingdom – but sacrifice is.

And by definition, it's costly. You only sacrifice for what you believe. *“Ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence? Five were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army, another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War. They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.”*

*“What kind of men were they? Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means, well educated. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in rags. Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward. Vandals or soldiers or both, looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.”*

*“At the Battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis, had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. The owner quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt. Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months. John Hart was driven from his wife’s bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his grist mill were laid waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart. Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.” – Chris Talton*

The ‘flashy’ and so-called ‘relevant’ spiritual hype we hear so much of today is simply worthless to the soul. Teaching that fosters the me-centered material prosperity often misrepresents the gospel. As sacrifice becomes less and less ‘in vogue’, less appealing to today’s spiritual seeker so to speak, it simply isn’t dealt with from the pulpit let alone in our daily lives. We can go through all the religious motions and still miss the target.

You know, the church is always healthiest when under persecution. Why? Daily sacrifice. The great apostle Paul said, “I die daily.” (1 Cor 15:31) Christ said the children of the kingdom are sown in this world as good seed (Mat 13:38) and Paul, picking up on that theme wrote, “...what is sown is not made alive unless it dies.” (1 Cor 15:36)

We want to hear about grace and we should; we long to hear about love and we should; yet for those of us who truly desire to follow Christ, we strangely yearn for and respond to this notion of sacrifice when we understand it. Sacrifice is not just some Old Testament or Jewish deal. It is a fundamental part of the character of every true Christian. And so, let’s consider both the OT and NT practices of sacrifice and the pictures in them. (But, beware, reading further may have serious consequences!)

We’ll begin with the Levitical offerings for they were specified exactly by the Lord. There were five basic sacrifices or offerings therein – the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering (which was treated much the same as the sin offering). Each had its special practice, purpose and illustrated a powerful point.

## For each practice a purpose

The *whole burnt offering* was a voluntary sacrifice (Lev.1). The animal was to be a male from the herd or flock that had no physical blemish. What set this offering apart was that the entire animal, not just part of it, was to be consumed by fire.

This clearly points to the Garden of Gethsemane as well as Calvary. Jesus showed us the fulfillment of this sacrifice in His complete dedication to the Father. For the worshiper of God, it is an expression of thanks, an indication of the worshiper’s desire for fellowship with the LORD. The shedding of blood in it speaks of the need

though for atonement, that is, a covering for sin, for this dedication and fellowship to be realizable. Like Cain, many people want to come to God with a bloodless offering so to speak. They want fellowship with God but on their terms. They like the love and peace and joy and all but don't want to deal with their sin.

For you and I too, dedication is voluntary. Paul was probably thinking of the Old Testament whole burnt offering when he wrote in Romans 12:1, *"I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship."*

The *grain offering* was to be ground fine, not whole or coarse. And it was to be mixed with salt which speaks of grace (Col 4:6), incense which speaks of prayer (Rev 8:4) and olive oil which speaks of the Spirit of God, crushed from the fruit of the olive tree (Lev. 2). It could not contain any leaven, a symbol of sin, nor any honey.

It points to the crushing Jesus experienced under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said He was the bread of life (John 6:32,33); sinless and gracious, He endured the bitterness of the cross and hell for us.

For the worshipper, it shows that following Him will mean times of brokenness as well (Mat 21:44)

The "shelem" or *peace offering* is all about fellowship (Lev. 3). As such, it points to the fellowship Jesus enjoyed with the Father from eternity past and which He invites us to share with Him for eternity future. In it, God reserved the "fat upon the inwards" for Himself which

pictures that the best part of us – the inner man – is His.

The family of the worshiper ate parts of the sacrificed animal together. The symbolism is powerful, picturing the family as guests at God's table. You see, to be served food in the Middle East was an honor and a mark of friendship. By serving food, the host became obligated to protect his guests. Thus the fellowship offering reminds us how complete God's welcome is. We find wholeness and well-being – "shalom" -- in the presence of our God. And He fully commits Himself to those who approach Him with faith.

The *sin offering* was not voluntary (Lev. 4). Whoever sinned—an anointed priest, the whole community, a leader, or an ordinary member of the community—the same procedure had to be followed. As with the other offerings, the sacrificed animal was to be without blemish. Its blood, however, was to be sprinkled seven times (seven being the Bible's number of completion) before the veil which speaks of a complete covering of sin.

As with the previous offering, the fat upon the inwards and the kidneys were God's but the rest of the animal was to be taken outside the camp to the place where ashes were dumped and be burned. This points clearly to Calvary. Jesus was crucified "outside the camp" both of Jerusalem and figuratively the Jewish people for they rejected Him.

We as believers are told to come to Him "outside the camp" (Heb 13:13). This is so powerful – He's

outside our comfort zone, we must leave the world behind.

The *trespass (unintended sin) offering* was treated with the same law as the sin offering (Lev. 7). It goes to illustrate that all sin has to be dealt with whether intentional or not.

### **Fulfilled in Christ Jesus**

*"Try to imagine yourself at Golgotha Hill on Good Friday. The cross is placed on the ground and you are thrown backward with your shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of your wrist. He drives a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through your wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull your arms too tightly, allowing you some flex and movement. The cross is then lifted into place and fastened onto the upright set into the hill."*

*"Your left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving your knees flexed. You are now crucified. As you slowly sag down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in your brain. You push yourself upward to avoid this stretching torment. But now you feel the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves of your feet."*

*"As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through your muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push yourself*

*upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. You fight to raise yourself in order to get even one small breath."*

*"What follows is hours of limitless pain: cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from your lacerated back as you move up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins: a deep, crushing pain within the chest as your heart cavity fills with serum and begins to compress the heart."*

*"It is now almost over: the loss of fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. Finally, you feel the chill of death creeping through your tissues. You welcome its approach. Such was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for you and for me."*—Chris Talton

Here was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices and the first of the New. Jesus said, *"whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."* (Luke 14:27) And so, what do we observe of our Lord in His sacrifice?

1. After being beaten, scourged and nailed to the cross, Jesus said, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* Forgiveness flows out of sacrifice. Christ's attitude was absolutely contrary to the sin nature in us that wants to get even for suffering or get bitter in the bitterness. When we sacrifice, we

usually want glory or at least appreciation. We want to receive rather than to give. But in Jesus -- "... we have redemption through His blood (sacrifice), the forgiveness of sins," (Eph 1:7)

2. Upon the cross, responding to the thief next to him who plead, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," Jesus said, "Verily I say unto thee, Today, you shall be with Me in paradise." Faith flows out of sacrifice. Jesus could exult in the offering of Himself through faith in His Father. This is contrary to the common notion today that sacrifice indicates failure and a lack of faith. We say, "God's really in this!" when things go well but can stumble in doubt when He leads us into sacrifice. In fact, God leads those into sacrifice who are faithful.
3. In painful agony, when Jesus "saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!'" Family flows out of sacrifice. Christ's compassion for his mother in the midst of His agony is the essence of God's family. It is this kind of love in the midst of sacrifice that builds the eternal relationships between us -- and it's so contrary to our nature which is to be considerate and kind when all is well but difficult and self-centered in times of sacrifice. (Ouch, that one hurts!)
4. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst'. Fulfillment flows

out of sacrifice. Jesus had earlier rejected a drink intended to numb His pain. He wanted the full measure of suffering in the midst of His sacrifice and then later He knew when "all things were now accomplished". Fulfillment is not found in pleasure; it's not in the satisfying of my ego or in the numbing to the pain ordained by God. We find fulfilling purpose flowing out of sacrifice.

5. Near the end, Jesus cried out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" Forsakenness flows out of sacrifice. This may seem like a real negative twist, but apart from this 'aloneness' Christ could not have redeemed us. Sacrifice will sometimes put you in the place of feeling alone and forsaken. Clearly, this is contrary to our natural desire for acceptance and popularity. And though God is truly the Maker of relationships and community, He is also the Maker of our forsakenness. It's here in solitude that we deal with what we truly believe. Every great character of the scripture experienced a sense of abandonment. It will look like the valley of the shadow of death and we all will walk it alone. And yet we're not alone for when all others forsake us, Christ is there -- always and forever.
6. Finally, Jesus said, "It is finished." Finishing flows from sacrifice. And what a glorious finish! Jesus didn't stop, never quit. The faithful will finish through sacrifice. And apart from sacrifice, there is no finish, not in

the sense of completion. We naturally find it easy to start, easier to run the race when we're fresh but we must not falter or quit to avoid sacrifice! We must finish in sacrifice. At the conclusion of an incredibly sacrificial life, Paul wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim 4:7)

7. His last words upon the cross -- when "He had cried again with a loud voice, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit, He yielded up the ghost." Fearlessness flows out of sacrifice. Jesus died in only about six hours whereas many if not most healthy men lasted up to two and even three days. That's why it was normal to break the legs of the victims in order speed up their dying through strangulation. However, Jesus' legs weren't broken because He was already dead. He was already dead because He didn't fear death. He embraced it fearlessly. He committed Himself unto His Father. Sacrifice kills the natural man but we need not fear. Fearless confidence in God is the result. Paul said confidently, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

#### He led the way

"Then said Jesus to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Mat 16:24) "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) What clearer terms could Christ have

used to make it plain that following Him included a daily sacrifice??

But the devil hates it. Recall that the first murder way back in Genesis 4 was prompted by a snit over sacrifice. Here's a guarantee -- your sin-centered natural man will eschew godly sacrifice at every opportunity and make every logical, reasonable, rational, sensible excuse to stop it even if you dare to start. Yes, the Antichrist will stop the daily ritual of sacrifice and here's the practical application for us as believers -- as with the last days temple in Jerusalem, when godly sacrifice stops, devilish desolation of the holy place begins. Now, it may be wrapped in an attractive package but in any pretty wrapper, it's still an abomination and it stinks.

The desolation of false religiosity and ease smells like death while godly sacrifice has the scent of life. Wow -- that's totally counter to the natural man isn't it? But it's absolutely true. And you need a heavenly perspective to understand it. "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life." (2Cor 2:14-16)

You want to put up a stink in hell? Daily sacrifice. You want to follow in the steps of Christ? Daily sacrifice. You want to please God with a beautiful fragrance? Daily sacrifice.

It's heavenly minded perfume -- "*a sweet aroma to the LORD.*"