

Sacrifice

The word `sacrifice` is mentioned many times within the context of the biblical scriptures, most often it is to be found within the pages of the old testament but the new testament also has its fair share of the word.

I think that many bible readers can appreciate that when the word is used in the Old Testament it more often than not literally refers to the blood sacrifice of animals as an offering or as an atonement to the Lord God, for the remission of sins.

A blood sacrifice was also offered as a gesture of thanksgiving for mercies received and blessings bestowed by the Lord on an individual, tribe or nation.

On searching for the mention of the first sacrifice within the scriptures I thought that I had found it in **Genesis 31: 54**. `Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his bretheren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and they stayed all night on the mount`. But having read this I was prompted to think, `hold on a minute, if this *really* is the *first* actual incidence of sacrifice within the pages of the holy scriptures then why does it give the impression that Jacob has instigated it of his own self, surely that cannot be right. Did Jacob have the audacity to suppose that he was close enough to the Lord God to know that going out and capturing one of His creatures, bringing it into His `presence`, ceremoniously slaughtering it and then offering it to Him, would actually please Him? Well the pointer to the truth of the incident was right there before me, it was not only the word `sacrifice` that I should have been searching for within the scriptures but also the word `offering`.

The first mention within the scriptures of the word `offering` in relation to a blood sacrifice can be found in **Genesis 4: 4**. `And Abel also brought of the first born of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect towards Abel and to his offering`. And so it was, at that time, that the Lord much preferred the offering of the blood sacrifice of the animal above that of the offering of the ground-grown `fruits` of the earth that had been proffered by Abel`s brother, Cain.

So should we, can we, draw any long-lasting conclusions from this fact, from this selection procedure that happened so far back in mankind`s history? Did it allude to anything that lay ahead concerning the accepted way as to how men should be prepared to sincerely worship their God, and that this way is still in force and so it remains with us right up to this, our present day? Let`s have a read of **Genesis 22: 2**. `And He (the Lord) said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him up there as a burned offering upon one of the mountains which I will indicate to you`. Let us now consider that last scripture. To any right thinking and loving parent what can be more precious to them than *their own* life? I think that you already know the answer, it is of course the lives of their children, but especially the life of an only child, and extra-especially the life of an only child that had been so very long yearned for and waited for. This being the case, then a person could not offer up (sacrifice) to the Lord God anything more beloved or precious to themselves than this child. Now the Lord knew and knows this, but bear in mind that our God is, as the scriptures tell us, a `jealous God`, He does not want us to love anything or anybody more than we love Him. It`s hard for us I know to try to come to terms with this, and the Lord knows this, and He makes allowances for us in this respect to some degree, *but not many*. Once Abraham had proved to the Lord that he was willing to offer up his beloved only begotten son as a blood sacrifice, the Lord prevented him from going

through with it and provided Abraham with a ram that was trapped in some undergrowth to be sacrificed in Isaac's place. Throughout the whole of the scriptures the Lord has never again asked for this kind of human blood sacrifice to be performed by any man or woman. With Abraham and Isaac it was a one off. But what a portent this scenario was of things to come!!!

It was as near to the ultimate sacrifice that the Lord required of mankind for sins committed. But we now know what, or rather *Who*, was to pay the ultimate sacrifice for the *remission* of mankind's sins. The difference being that God the Father, did not spare the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, our Lord and Creator Jesus Christ, but allowed Him (with His consent) to suffer horribly and taste the awfulness of death so that we may live! **Hebrews 10: 6, and 9-12.**

In burned offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Your will O God. He takes away the first in order that He may establish the second. By the which we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once and for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God`.

Think of the `agony of mind` that God the Father must have gone through when His only begotten Son offered to sacrifice Himself for our sins, and then of having to witness His Son's torment at the time of His crucifixion. Yes, Almighty God the Father has feelings! after all, He, through the actual `hands on` work of His Son, Jesus Christ, created us and our feelings. Now the question must be asked, how can anything, especially `feelings` be created *without* the Creator having first hand prior knowledge of those feelings, how can the Creator create *anything* without first having prior knowledge of it? Let's read **Isaiah 29: 16.** Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay; for shall the piece of work say of the potter who fashioned it, He didn't make me? Or shall the thing made, say of him who created it; He didn't know what he was doing? For a more comprehensive `list` as it were, of the Lord's total understanding of the human `condition` and of His ability to empathise with it, the book of Job should be read from and including chapter 38. right until the end of the book, but for now we'll just read from a part where the Lord is talking to Job about His creation and His understanding of mankind, (especially when compared to mankind's understanding of mankind) **Job 38: 2-4.** and **Job 40: 2.** Who is this that darkens counsel with words without knowledge? Now, prepare yourself like a man, for I will demand of you and you will answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me the answer if you know. Shall he that contends with the Almighty God, teach Him? let him that reproves the Lord, let him answer it`.

Returning to Abraham and the intended sacrifice of Isaac, what should we suppose; was it all predestined, was there *any* chance that Abraham would refuse to be compliant with the Lord's instructions, or did the Lord only decide right there and then that because of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice *his* only begotten son that there was perhaps *still* a spark of good hope for humankind (a good hope which Satan tried to destroy in the garden of Eden) in as much as at least one man had been found worthy? But worthy of what? Let us first try to understand the workings of our Lord God's mind. (there is no blasphemy in trying to do this, after all, He wants us to get to know Him, but even so, we must be very careful at arriving at any conclusions) One man, Abraham, a man right before God, but *not* perfect, one man selected out of how many who walked the earth at that time, millions? it's possible, but what I'm driving at is this, would this tiny percentage of mankind be enough to sway any of our world `leaders` and politicians today to form an honest and a right opinion over any given matter? I don't think so, because they like, amongst other persuasions, to deal in majorities of millions who they want to cast their vote for

them, no matter what the character or the criminal record of any of these millions may be, why, in the U.K. they are even contemplating giving jailed thieves, perverts, rapists, thugs and murderers the right to vote, so desperate are they for `followers`! Our great God Almighty is not at all impressed or swayed by large numbers of people or of what they think, (contrary to the workings of the Jewish rabbinical system) we can read of one example of this in **Genesis 18: 26-33**. `And the Lord said (to Abraham) If I find in Sodom fifty righteous people inside the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I, who am but dust and ashes, have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Perhaps there may be five less than fifty who are righteous, will You still destroy the city for lack of five? And the Lord replied, If I find forty five in the city who are righteous, I will not destroy it. And Abraham spoke yet again and said, perhaps there may only be forty found there. And the Lord said, I will not destroy it for the forty`s sake. And Abraham said, O do not be angry with me, when I say that what if only thirty righteous be found there? and the Lord said, I will not destroy it for the sake of those thirty. Then Abraham said, what if only twenty righteous be found there? And the Lord said, I will not destroy it for the twenty`s sake. And Abraham said, O please do not be angry, for I will ask but once more, what if only ten be found therein? And the Lord said, For the sake of ten I will not destroy it. And the Lord went on His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham. And Abraham returned to his place`. We can also understand from this scripture that the Lord is not willing wherever possible, for any of the righteous to perish alongside the unrighteous by any acts that He, `hands on` performs that will alter situations that are not already *specifically* predestined to occur. Abraham`s willing obedience to comply with the Lord`s command to sacrifice his son Isaac, may well have been the beginning of the `next phase` of the Lord`s plan for mankind, the phase which included the ushering in of the birth of our God, Lord Creator, Jesus Christ, as `Emmanuel`, God with us in the flesh. Of course the big difference between these two acts of sacrifice is the fact that God did not insist that Abraham go the whole way and kill Isaac, instead He provided a way out for him with a substitute sacrifice for his son. Basically, I think that God said in His heart, `Enough, Abraham has proved himself worthy, so I will now make the ultimate sacrifice that is required to enable the children yet to be born of Abraham`s children to live, for I know that their sins shall be many and grievous and only the sacrifice of their living God in the flesh will be enough to provide an atonement for those sins`. I think that most people reading this article will already know that although one person may direct a wrong and evil act towards another person, the actual sin of that act is committed against the Lord God, and we can read of this fact in **Psalm 51: 2-4**. `Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is constantly before me. Against You, (the Lord God) and You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be blameless when You judge`. And so only the most righteous and purest of sacrifices could have laid the grounds for the forgiveness of the sins of mankind, and there could be no more righteous a sacrifice to be found or made than that of the Lord God Himself, in the shape and form of Jesus Christ. And so it is because of His sacrifice, His blood sacrifice, that any and all of us are alive this day, here and now, and make no mistake, it had to be a blood sacrifice because no other type would have been acceptable under the terms and conditions that had already been established and laid down. Let`s read from the book of **Hebrews 9: 12-28**. `Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Jesus Christ, who through the

eternal spirit offered Himself without any defect to God cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is become the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death for the redemption of sins committed that were under the first testament, they who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where there is a will, there must for it to be activated, occur the death of the will maker. For a will only comes into force upon the death of the will maker, it is of no consequence whilst the will maker is yet alive. Whereupon neither the first testament was confirmed without blood. For when Moses had spoken every commandment to all of the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hysop, and sprinkled both the book of the law and all the people with it saying, This is the blood of the testament (agreement) which the Lord God has commanded you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels used in the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. It was therefore necessary that the patterns (templates) of things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Jesus Christ is not entered into the holy places that have been made with hands, which are but the representations of the true, but He has entered into heaven itself, to appear before the presence of God (the Father) on our behalf. Not that He should offer Himself as a sacrifice more than once, in the same way that the high priest on earth enters into the holy place every year with the blood of new sacrifices. For if that was to be the case then Jesus Christ would have had to suffer since the foundation of the world, but now, once, in the end time of the world, He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And it is appointed to all men to die once, and then comes the judgement. So Jesus Christ was sacrificed just the once to bear the sins of many. And to those that seek Him, He shall appear for the second time, without sin, to salvation`.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ has not only enabled us to live our present flesh and blood lives, but it has also cleared the way, laid down the road and opened up the door to us for the opportunity to pass through that door into eternal life, a life free of sin, pain, sorrow and evil. Does this then mean that all the need for sacrifice by sinning mankind has been done away with, is there no more need for it, for any kind of sacrifice physical or from the heart? Well, the answer to that is no, and as any true practising Christian should realise, personal sacrifice should be very much a part of our daily lives. A very simple example of this would be letting somebody else have that last slice of cake, even though you wanted it for yourself. But what about a blood sacrifice? We will have a read from the scriptures to see what they tell us about what kind of sacrifices we are still expected to make as regards ourselves and our relationships with others and with the Lord God, but first let`s deal with the blood sacrifice. *This sacrifice is no longer required for us to make.* At the time when this sacrifice was required of mankind, it was the ultimate sacrifice that could be made for the atonement of sin because of what the blood represented, let`s read from the book of **Leviticus 17: 14.** which describes for us what the blood is, `For it is the life of all flesh, the blood of the flesh provides the life for the flesh, therefore I (the Lord) said to the children of Israel, You shall not *eat* the blood of any kind of flesh, because the life of the flesh is the blood, therefore whosoever amongst you eats it shall be destroyed`. Jesus Christ was, and still is, the ultimate blood sacrifice for the atonement for our sins, and it is one that can never be bettered, therefore any blood sacrifice offered now, after His personal sacrifice, would be and is considered to be superfluous, redundant, and even blasphemous because it would `fly in the face` of our Lord`s sacrifice making it appear to be of no value to us in our present time. Whereas before the sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ, there was

commanded by the Lord God as a remembrance of Israel's deliverance from the cruel and evil clutches of Egyptian rule, the blood sacrifice of a `passover` lamb to be made yearly, but Jesus Christ's blood sacrifice took the place of that `passover` lamb once and for all. Let's now read from the book of **1 Corinthians 5: 6-7**. `Your boasting is not good, don't you know that just a small amount of yeast (representative of sin) will leaven a whole lump of dough? Therefore do away with your yeast so that you are as a lump of unleavened dough. For even Jesus Christ our passover (lamb) has been sacrificed for us`. The apostle Paul tells us in the book of Romans how we should be making our daily, living sacrifice, let's read **Romans 12: 1-2**. `I beseech you therefore bretheren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies (the way that you live your life) as a living sacrifice which is holy and acceptable to the Lord, which after all, is only a reasonable thing for you to do. And do not be conformed to the (evil) ways of this world, but transform yourself by the renewing of your mind so that it can be seen in you that which is good and acceptable and perfect as the Lord God wants you to be`. Make no mistake, for a person to deliberately and constantly `go against the flow` of this Satanic, Babylonian, world ruling system, and to resist the temptations of it which are all around us in the guise of `everyday life`, is not an easy thing to do, and it is the first sacrifice that any worthy Christian should be *constantly* striving to make. It is a constant battle to be continually on our guard discerning that which is acceptable in our Lord's eyes for us to engage in and that which is not. Striving requires effort but if the prize, the reward for that effort is worthwhile then it must be worth the sacrifice. Not many are called to partake in this sacrifice because the very first step towards making it, belief in the Lord and the *willingness* to obey all of His commandments, is beyond almost all who walk this earth. We who strive to keep the commandments should always bear in mind and believe that our *eternal* reward is to be worth the sacrifices that we have to make in this present lifetime. Now this is not to say that we do not get *any* kind of reward at this present time, because the Lord provides us with that which we need that will enable us to continue in the work that He has pre-planned (predestined) for us to achieve. I would suppose that the main blessing or reward that we have in this present life is `peace of mind`, no small reward in these troubled and manic times in which we witness so many of our fellow men and women succumbing to the `psychiatrist's chair`, taking to drink and /or drugs or following Satanic religions and cults or indulging in idolatrous practices that come in many forms including `hero` worship and emulation. We true Christians *choose* to make our daily sacrifices, the Lord does not force them upon us, and having made our sacrifices the Lord does not then want to see any of us walking about with long, miserable faces because of having made them. Let's read from the book of **2 Corinthians 9: 6-7**. `But this I will say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows generously will also reap generously. As every man so determines in his heart so let him give, but not grudgingly or because he feels that he has to, because the Lord loves a cheerful giver`. Now I know that there will be times when we feel a bit `under the weather`, a bit miserable, this is only `human nature`, but even so, the Lord would like us to try and keep our `troubles` to ourselves or within the confines of our fellow bretheren because the rest of the world just do not understand what exactly is going on either with us or indeed with themselves. For example, if we fast either for the day of atonement or for some other reason it is not exactly a joyous thing for us to have to do but Jesus Christ Himself has informed us as to how we should present ourselves to the world during this particular `sacrifice`, let's read from **Matthew 6: 16-18**. `Moreover when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites who go about with deliberately exaggerated miserable faces so that all who see them know that they are fasting. In truth I tell you that because of the recognition that they seek from men, they have their reward in that. But you,

when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fellow men do not know that you are fasting, but your heavenly Father who in secret knows that you are fasting, shall reward you not in secret but openly`. Personal sacrifices /offerings should also be made with the correct attitude of mind. For example, two people unknown to one another decide to make an offering to the Lord of £5. each, not very much but it is all that either of them can reasonably spare. The first person has debated long and hard whether to give the money or to put it towards buying something a little bit special for himself, but eventually decides that because it is such a small amount and that it will barely be missed it may as well be offered to the Lord via the church, who knows, he thinks within himself, the Lord may bless me because of it and next week I may win the lottery. The second person gives his £5. thinking only that even though it is such a small amount, the Lord knows that it is all that I can afford to give at the present time. Well, I should think that all of us who are reading this article recognize which of these two person`s offerings / sacrifice`s will be acceptable to the Lord. But not all of the so-called `christian` world would see it the way that we as true Christians do, no, most think that it is the actual *act* of giving and most especially the *amount of cash* given that opens up the gates to salvation, and that the giver`s attitude of mind doesn`t count, and so the more money that a person gives to the Lord *via the church* in this life then the higher up the imagined `angelic ladder` will be his position in the next life. Yes folks, money donated to the church can forgive you your sins and *buy* you salvation according to the large, mainstream `christian` churches, and lots of money will get you closer up the `saintly hierarchy` to be nearer to God! *This sort of attitude is why criminal organizations such as the Mafia, thrive without any guilty conscience towards God or fear of terrible, divine retribution!*

I know of a person who, when we first met, insisted most strongly (and suppose that he still does) that where the scripture states, (and I can only paraphrase because this is what *he* said) `give your life as a sacrifice`, that this is *only* referring to the day when any true Christian must be willing to lay down their mortal life for their faith and for the word of God. Well yes it does refer to this but it also encompasses a whole lot more in between as well, and I think that by a very wide margin he has missed the whole point of the ethos, the sentiment of that particular scripture. Let`s go back to the book of **Romans 12: 1**. were it states `.. *present your bodies a living sacrifice*. . ` a *living* sacrifice, not a one off `the day has finally come for me to die for my faith` kind of sacrifice! The true Christian life should be one of overcoming, overcoming and resisting the easy flow of this world, this in itself is a sacrifice and it is one of if not the most important sacrifice for a true Christian to make, let`s remind ourselves of this from the words of Jesus Christ in the book of **Matthew 10: 39**. `He that finds his life (makes a `mark` for himself and is satisfied in this life) shall lose it, but he who loses his life (disregards wealth and status in this life) for My sake, shall find it`. (eternal life). Well that person who I met is probably still waiting to make his ultimate sacrifice via his willingness to die for the word of Christ, and probably interprets Matthew 10: 39. as referring to it and meaning *only* it. Well, that is part of but not the entire meaning of that scripture as you can see by the bracketed words in grey that I have included as interpretations. One *further* interpretation of it is this, that through the act of baptism a person`s old way of life, his `guiltless` indulgence in sin, should stop, die if you like, and that a new life of recognizing sin and of striving to overcome it but this time with the help of the Lord`s holy spirit, should begin. In the book of **Romans 6: 3-7**. we can read, `*Don`t you understand that as many of us that were baptized into Jesus Christ have been baptized into His death? That then being the case we are buried with Him by baptism into death, and so as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should be walking in newness of*

life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be resurrected in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old self is crucified with Him, so that the body of sin may be destroyed, so that in future we shall not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin`.

Now we`ll read one of the illustrative examples that Jesus Christ so often told to people, it`s one that is so well known but I wonder how many people have considered what is really being said. **Matthew 9: 17.** `Neither do men put new wine into old wineskins in case the wineskins split or perish and the wine leaks out. They put the new wine into new wineskins and so both are preserved`. The new wine that Jesus mentioned here can be likened to God`s holy spirit and the old wineskin can be compared to the human, carnal mindset which continues to indulge in its` cravings in its` same old ways. We can understand then that a new `wineskin`, a new mindset, a complete change of lifestyle, is needed to successfully contain and retain a `new wine`, or God`s holy spirit. *This change of lifestyle and mindset will require constant sacrifice to prevent the recipient of God`s holy spirit from being tempted back into the ways of the flesh and the ways of this world.* Sacrifice then, can be equated with our daily struggles of overcoming not only our `built in` carnal urges but also the temptations of Satan and his demons to try to make us succumb to these `urges`.

In the reading of the old testament we can begin to understand how Israel fell foul of their ignorance of the Lord God`s true intentions for them. They imagined that through the exact and meticulous observing and keeping of ceremonies and rituals and by doing this physical thing and/or that physical thing, that this is all that they had to do to be pleasing and righteous in the Lord`s eyes. The Lord God informed the prophet Hosea about this when He spoke to him in **Hosea 6: 6.** `For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; (of animals) and I desired the knowledge of God, more than burned offerings`. In the book of Micah we can read a bit more of the same, **Micah 6: 6-8.** `Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burned offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn up as a sacrifice for the sins that I have committed, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? The Lord has showed you, O man, that which is good; and so what does the Lord require of you? this He requires of you, that you act justly, and love mercy and to walk humbly with your God`. Although many true Christians do, and rightly so, support their church with offerings of cash, (especially as it is commanded for the men to do so on three of the holy days of the year) it is still the spiritual intent of the heart that matters to the Lord when these cash offerings are made, because that is the real `sacrifice` that is counted as worthy. But, and this is a huge `but`, not even this or any other sacrifice will be enough to pave the way for a person`s salvation without, . . . without what? Let`s read this portion of scripture from the new testament to find out, **1 Corinthians 13: 1-3.** `Even though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but am devoid of love, I am to be likened as a brass gong or as a tinkling cymbal. And although I may have the gift of prophecy and the understanding of all mysteries and of all knowledge, and although I have such great faith so that I can move mountains with it, but even for all of this if I do not have love dwelling within me, then all these other gifts will profit me nothing at all`. now to **verse 13.** `And so now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love`. Now let`s read the words of Jesus Christ when He was explaining to His dinner host that He knew exactly what `type of woman` it was that was washing His feet with her tears, **Luke 7: 47.** `Wherefore I say to you, her sins which are many, are forgiven her, because she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little`.

And so to sum up. Although ultimately it may not happen, any true Christian should be ready and prepared to willingly lay down their physical life as a sacrifice and as a personal testimony of their Christian faith and of the truth and of the expectation of a resurrection into a new, better life to come, of which that faith portrays and promises. Just as important and perhaps more so, we should never lose sight or be forgetful of the on-going daily sacrifices that the Lord God expects of us, the sacrifices that we make of keeping under subjugation the urges of our old self and way of life that we undertook to try and get rid of after being baptised into the family of our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. This sort of `living` sacrifice is I think the one that is most acceptable to our God, giving us the opportunity to try to live our lives not as we are so often tempted to live them but as our Lord God wants us to live them. When we think about it, we, for all that we are and are not, cannot offer anything greater or more to our God than our willingness to be obedient to that which He wants us to try to be, everything else *already* belongs to Him. Certainly He could *make* us compliant to His will, but then we would all be characterless `robots`, what then would be the point of human life? To curtail and bring into subjection our God-given free will and then offer it back to the Lord as a `work in progress` sacrifice is the supreme act of love and respect for our God that we as poor fleshly humans, can make. Remember, if we give our very soul and spirit of life back to the Lord, then it will be in safe hands, and nothing, but *nothing*, powerful, evil, demonic spirit being or otherwise, will *ever* be able to take *us* from out of His hands! Let`s finish with this final scripture, **Romans 8: 38-39.** `For I am convinced, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of our God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord`.