

The Lamb of God

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year... Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight..." (Exodus 12:5-7)

When John the Baptist presents the Messiah to the world he presents Him as the Lamb of God.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)

If Jesus is the Lamb of God that was sacrificed, then the logical inference many people draw is that God wanted His Son to be killed in order to pay for our sins. Within this paradigm, mankind is not murdering the Son of God but doing what God wants.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief..." (Isaiah 53:10)

If it pleased the Lord to bruise His Son on the Cross in sacrifice, then the impression many receive is that God needed this sacrifice to satisfy His anger against our sin. The reasoning is that the justice of God needed to be satisfied. In order to show how bad our sins are, Jesus had to take our place in death to satisfy the Father's justice.

God Did Not Desire Sacrifices

Did God want or require these sacrifices?

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require." (Psalm 40:6)

The Bible plainly states that God did not want sacrifices. It also plainly states that He did not require burnt offerings and sin offerings. Further to this, in Jeremiah 7:22-23 we read:

"For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'"

How can God say that He did not command the children of Israel about offering burnt offerings and sacrifices when it appears obvious that He did command them to offer the Passover and established the sacrificial system? Is the Bible contradicting itself here? Let's look at another example:

God Did Not Desire a King

"So when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said to him, 'There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.'" (1 Samuel 9:17)

In this story, God is commanding His prophet Samuel to anoint a man to be king over the people of Israel. In the immediate context it appears that God is the one who is commanding these things. The broader context is that Israel wanted a king and God gave to them their request.

"But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' So Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them....'" (1 Samuel 8:6-7)

The Bible confirms that God did not want to give Israel a king but allowed them to have one.

"O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me. I will be your King; Where is any other, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath.'" (Hosea 13:9-11)

What does it mean that God gave Israel a king in His anger? The anger of God is to let man have the wrong things that man desires. The Bible shows in several places God commanding things to man that man desires. (For an expanded study on this see chapter 13 of the book **Acts of our Gentle God** available at fatheroflove.info.)

The Mirror of the Sacrificial System

After Adam sinned he charged the Son of God with the responsibility for the actions which he believed incurred a death sentence and feared God would execute upon him.

"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:12)

In order to escape death he shifted the blame upon the Son of God and his wife. He was willing for her to die in his place. When God said "Thou shalt surely die" Adam thought that God's justice demanded death. He failed to realize that it is sin that naturally brings death (Romans 6:23; James 1:14-15), not God. He also reasoned that blame could be shifted and that another could pay the debt he believed God demanded. In order for Adam to see what was in his heart, God commanded the sacrificial system. **Like having an earthly king, the sacrificial system is a reflection of what man is thinking, not what God is thinking.** The sacrificial system is a mirror into the mind of man. In this context you can harmonize the texts of the Bible about the sacrifices.

"So Samuel said: '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.'" (1 Samuel 15:22)

God simply wants us to trust and obey Him by trusting in His grace. He did not desire to give men sacrifices, but He had to command that which was in the heart of man to show him his sinfulness. God commanded them the things that were in their hearts in order to cause sin to abound. Romans 5:20. Their hearts were full of sacrifice and offering. Is this not what they did around the golden calf? So God gave them commandments to show them the extent of their carnal mind.

"Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live." (Ezekiel 20:25)

How can it be that God gives things to His people by which they cannot live? He gives them the things that they want. How far would the human mind travel in order to try and appease God with sacrifices? When the temple was being dedicated "King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep." (2 Chronicles 7:4-5)

Where did God require all these things? The Bible says that God did not desire sacrifice and offering. Men were willing to sacrifice their own children to please the god they imagined. What does the Scripture say?

"Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:7-8)

God wanted people to trust Him and receive His grace to obey. He didn't desire sacrifices to be appeased. A text that comes to mind in response to this is the following:

"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22)

Why does the law teach that without the shedding of blood there is no remission, pardon, or freedom? It is because the law is a mirror to show what is in the human heart.

*"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for **by the law is the knowledge of sin.**" (Romans 3:20)*

It is not by the deeds of offering the sacrifices of the law that men are justified - *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4)* - but it is through seeing that offering sacrifices is what is in our nature and then repenting of this sin. The law brings the seed into the open so that it might be confessed. **It is not God who demands that "without the shedding of blood" there can be no forgiveness, but rather it is man who believes this and he can't believe God will forgive him unless he does a sacrifice.** The night before He died Jesus prayed to His Father saying: *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."* (John 17:4).

If Christ finished the work that His Father gave Him to do the night before He died then God did not need His Son to die, He only needed to show us His loving merciful character. **Man needed Christ to die because to us in our natural state (warped thinking) there can be no forgiveness without punishment. For us to accept the forgiveness of God the human race had to see Jesus die.** Thus just before Jesus died He cried *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30).

One of the main reasons that the true heartbreak of the Cross is missed is because of the institution of the sacrificial system in the Old Testament.

"... On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb ... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it." (Exodus 12:3-7)

The impression these texts give is that God wants people to kill animals in sacrifice to Him and that when they do this He will bless them. But did God require these sacrifices? Does His justice demand that His wrath be appeased like the pagan gods of the other nations?

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