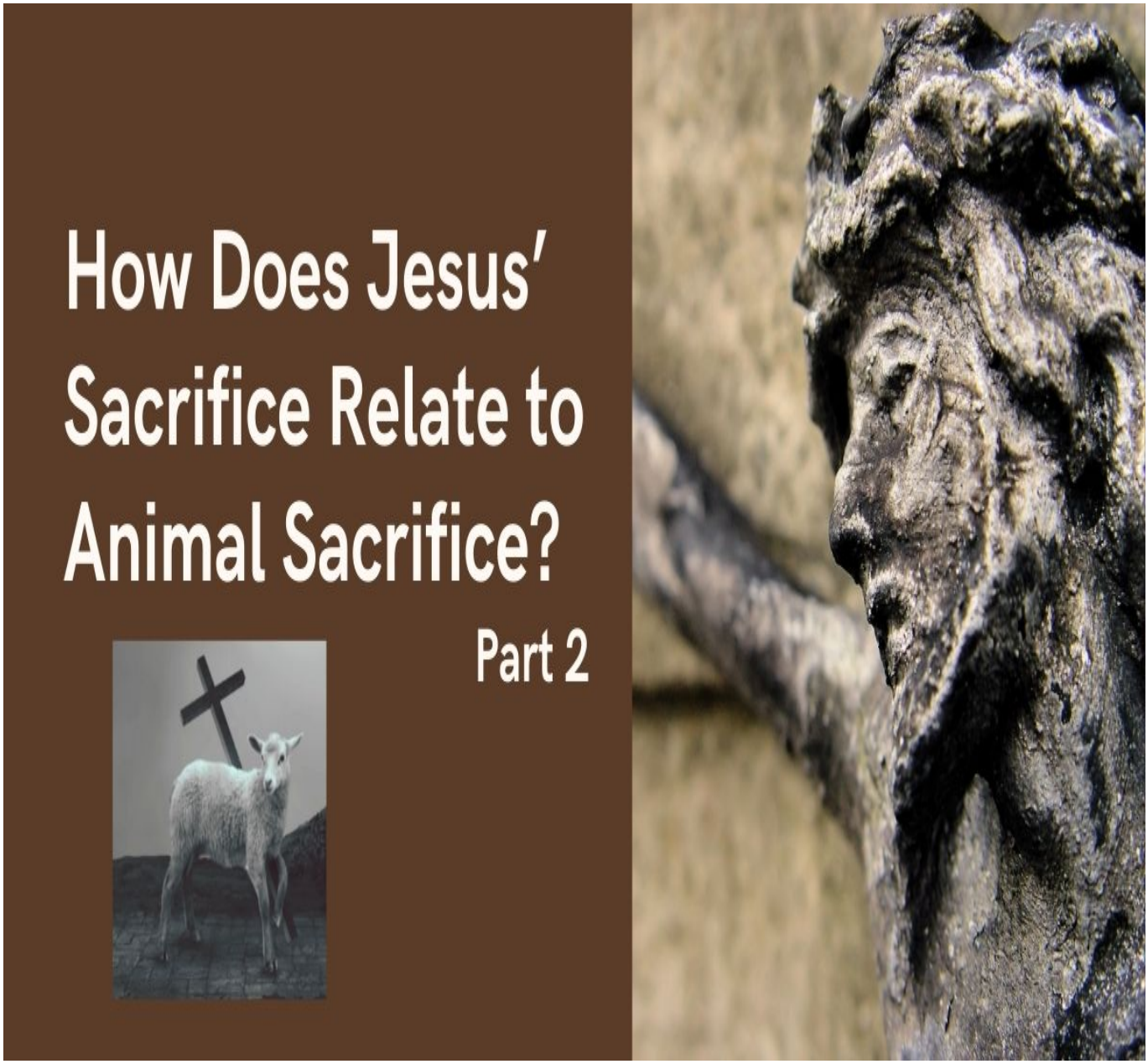
How Does Jesusâ€™ Sacrifice Relate to Animal Sacrifice? Part 2

Description



A study related to the SDA
Sabbath School Lesson for 2021, 2nd Quarter
The Promise: Godâ€™s Everlasting Covenant
Week 7
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Edited by Trent Wilde

This weekâ€™s lesson is entitled, â€œCovenant at Sinai,â€• and looks at the stories of the Exodus and Sinai and the ways they symbolically parallel personal salvation. Tuesdayâ€™s lesson called â€œThe Sinai Covenantâ€• says,

> â€œ[God] wanted to redeem [Israel] from sin, the ultimate slavery, and this could happen only through the sacrifice of the Messiah, as taught in the types and symbols of the sanctuary service.â€• Sabbath School Quarterly Lesson, Tuesday, May 11, 2021

As we covered last week in part one of this two-part series entitled, â€œHow Does Jesusâ€™ Sacrifice Relate to Animal Sacrifice?â€œ, most Christians understand the sacrifice of animals to be a foreshadowing of what Jesus would accomplish on the cross. But why is sacrifice needed in the first place and how exactly is the death of a sacrificial victim supposed to â€œworkâ€• anyway? Well, many are under the impression that it works kinda like this: God decided that all who disobey him â€“ all who sin, have committed a crime worthy of the death penalty. And that in order for justice to be served, someone simply has to die. But since all have sinned, all have a death sentence hanging over their heads, and since God didnâ€™t want everyone to die, he allowed for one person to die in place of another. Since a guilty person can only die for their own sins, it takes an innocent person to take the punishment for someone else. Again, this is the common way that people understand sacrifice â€“ it is a way for guilty people to escape Godâ€™s death penalty because Godâ€™s justice doesnâ€™t require the guilty to pay for their own crimes â€“ it just requires that someone pay for them.

Please read part 1 of this series before continuing on with todayâ€™s article! As a recap for those who have already read it, we evidenced from 1 Peter 2:18-25 that for Jesus to â€œbear our sinsâ€• does not mean that He took the responsibility for them, but rather that he endured them for our sake as an example for us, to empower and encourage us to do the same, trusting in the righteous justice of God to vindicate all who live patient, humble, righteous lives just like Jesus.

Now, to be clear, this does not mean that Jesusâ€™ death wasnâ€™t substitutionary. But it does mean that the way we have commonly imagined what it means for his death to be substitutionary is all wrong.

You see, the price of sin is death (Romans 6:23) â€“ all who sin have that fate hanging over their heads. This price can be paid either by dying for our own sins â€“ in which case death will be our final end and the end of our sins. Or we can allow the death of Jesus to change our hearts so that we turn from sin. Jesus was willing to â€œbear withâ€• our sins and subject Himself to this sin-sick world so that we could see first hand the horrible effects of sin on an innocent person, and therefore be so turned off from sin â€“ that we would be repulsed by it â€“ and reject every temptation to sin thereafter. Jesus lived a sinless, blameless life, and, as a human (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14, 17) showed us that we could do the same thing (John 8:11; Romans 6:12), if we will learn the lessons of the cross and make Jesusâ€™ death our own. We need to actually put an end to sin in our own lives by accepting His death as our own by dying to self, dying to sinâ€¦in the exact same way that Jesus did. Jesus used the moral power of the truth and human effort to overcome every temptation to sin, and we are expected to do no less.

Accepting Jesusâ€™ death as our own (Matthew 10:38; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 15:31; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 5:24), is to let His death put an end to sin in our hearts as verily as our own death would if we were to die the second death.

This is the scriptural truth of how Jesus death relates to our salvation. And we hope you were able to see from last weekâ€™s article that the popular story of why Jesus died and how his death saves us is not

scriptural and not true. But this popular story is also the lens through which people commonly interpret the sacrificial system before Jesus came to earth. This brings us to todayâ€™s lesson. If our common story of sacrifice is wrong, what is the truth about sacrifice before Jesus came to earth?

To tackle this question, first, we have to broach a very difficult subject. If this is the first article you have read, then, in addition to reading part 1 of this series, we recommend watching other videos and reading other studies that deal with the concept of a bible canon before continuing on with this article.

Again, this subject is one that probably wonâ€™t make sense if this is the first video you have seen or article you have read. As SDAs, we should easily be able to relate to this principle of carefully presenting subjects in an order that leads people from one point to the next, first laying a foundation, then building up from there. For example, consider SDA Revelation seminars! Presenters donâ€™t typically dive straight to â€œEllen White is our prophetâ€• because they know people arenâ€™t ready for that and other things need to be established first. It is like math, you canâ€™t dive straight into calculus without first establishing addition, subtraction, and the other fundamentals. In the same way, we want to give you other resources tagged above right now and linked below, that will be helpful in preparing you to understand the truth of animal sacrifice. While we will briefly mention the ideas covered in these resources as we progress, it would be impossible for us to lay down the foundation you need in this article. So, if you want to make sure you can understand this subject for what it is, please take the time to study these resources before returning to finish the rest of this article.

One of these helpful principles is set forth by Ellen White. In Christian Education, she said,

> â€œLet all seek to comprehend, to the full extent of their powers, the meaning of the word of God. A mere superficial reading of the inspired word will be of little advantage; for every statement made in the sacred pages requires thoughtful contemplation. It is true that some passages do not require as earnest concentration as do others; for their meaning is more evident. But the student of the word of God should seek to understand the bearing of one passage upon another until the chain of truth is revealed to his vision. As veins of precious ore are hidden beneath the surface of the earth, so spiritual riches are concealed in the passages of Holy Writ, and it requires mental effort and prayerful attention to discover the hidden meaning of the word of God. Let every student who values the heavenly treasure put to the stretch his mental and spiritual powers, and sink the shaft deep into the mine of truth, that he may obtain the celestial gold,â€”that wisdom which will make him wise unto salvation.â€• Ellen White, Christian Education, p. 100

So, if we superficially read the Word of God, we will not be able to mine the precious ore contained within! Something in the inspired word may be written quite clearly, but because it conflicts with our preconceived ideas and the traditions of man, we superficially read right past it. Part of the problem is with our understanding of the bible canon itself. We have understood the bible to be a comprehensive collection of inspired writings that makes up the be-all-end-all Word of God. But, as we have shown in the articles and videos we linked above, the whole concept of a bible canon is not an idea inspired by God. If it were, surely it would have been endorsed somewhere in the bible itself, or by Ellen White. But no, you will never find on the lips or in the writings of any prophet, Ellen White included, a finite list of books we are to consider inspired.

Now, this is not to say that uninspired writings are not valuable; it is just that we shouldnâ€™t use them as authoritative representations of Godâ€™s message.

Because of our uncritical acceptance of the idea of a bible canon, we end up never questioning a writing contained within the bible, even if it seems to conflict with another writing in the bible, because we might think of this as akin to questioning God. And while it would actually be wrong to give into the temptation to doubt and question which parts of an inspired writing really are inspired once we have tested that writing and discovered that it is from God, that doesnâ€™t mean we shouldnâ€™t have an honest and unbiased investigation into which books should be considered inspired in the first place. The sad fact is that most people havenâ€™t done this when it comes to the Bible. And it is very easy to see that this is true. Most Christians would defend the idea that the book of Hosea is scripture, even if they have never read it and have no idea what it says. On the other hand, many Christians wouldnâ€™t even consider that the Odes of Solomon might be scripture, even though they havenâ€™t read it and have no idea what it says. And if we are willing to defend one writing and reject another, even though we havenâ€™t read either, clearly, we arenâ€™t operating on the basis of real knowledge or personally thinking things through â€“ we are just trusting in a pastor, or a dogma â€“ we are just following tradition. Truly, this idea of a bible canon has dulled our powers of critical thinking. We need to be willing to study each writing on its own merits and accept or reject it on the basis of whether what it teaches is true, without regard to whether or not it was included in a bible canon.

This leads to the big issue we need to briefly address before we can move on with our topic. That is, the idea that Moses wrote the Pentateuch is not a scriptural idea. In other words, the idea that Moses wrote the Pentateuch is not an idea promoted in the writings of the Pentateuch itself, but is instead a later tradition accepted by Jews and Christians. This is another subject we ask you to look into in preparation for reading the rest of this article. Please see the article by Trent Wilde entitled, â€œThe Mosaic Torah,â€• to investigate the evidence for yourself.

The fact of the matter is that the Pentateuch is a redaction, or combination, of the works of at least 4 main authors, all writing from various different periods of Israelâ€™s history after the time of Mosesâ€™ death. It is widely agreed among scholars that an editor, called a â€˜redactor,â€™ combined these different works together in order to synthesize them into one work. This redaction most probably occurred after the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE since the first evidence of the Pentateuch in its combined form doesnâ€™t show up until after the return of the exiles from the Babylonian captivity. Due to several compelling lines of evidence, it is possible to differentiate between the different sources of the Pentateuch and to read them independent of each other. When one does this, what emerges is that each of these authors had different backgrounds, different perspectives, and different polemic goals. And strikingly, none of them claim inspiration â€“ at least we havenâ€™t been able to identify any such claim.

Again, some writers in the bible **do** claim inspiration, but some do not. The Pentateuch does not contain a claim to inspiration from any of its authors. Now, this is not to say that everything in the Pentateuch is wrong, but it is to say that we canâ€™t merely assume that it is right. In fact, we should test what the authors of the Pentateuch say to see if it is in harmony with the teachings of people who at least claimed to be delivering messages from God.

Now, assuming you have taken the time to read and watch the info in the links provided, letâ€™s move on to address more specifically the truth of sacrifice before Jesus came and died.

As you all know, the Pentateuch says God commanded humans to offer him animals sacrifices. It even says that He is pleased with these sacrifices. But since the authors of the Pentateuch donâ€™t even claim to be inspired, how can we know whether this really is something God commanded and whether it pleases Him? Well, thankfully, the Bible also contains the writings of some authors who actually did claim to be inspired by God and who we believe were actually inspired by God. And some of these authors speak specifically

about this issue of animal sacrifice.

First, letâ€™s look at the book of Amos. Amos wrote primarily to the Northern tribes in the early 8th century BC before the centralization of worship in Jerusalem (which didnâ€™t take place until at least the days of Hezekiah at the end of the 8th century). There is not one positive word about animal sacrifice in all of Amos, and this isnâ€™t for lack of comment. Overall, Amosâ€™s primary concern is about righteousness â€“ it is about truth and behaving with moral uprightness (See Amos 2:6-7; and Amos 5: 10, 12-15, 24). People in Amosâ€™s day, like some today, thought they could be righteous in the eyes of God by offering sacrifices. Here is what Amos said God had to say about that:

Amos 5:22-25 reads,

> 22 â€œFor if you offer to me burnt offerings and offerings, I will not take delight in them.
>
> And peace offerings from your fattened animals, I will not look at.
>
> 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs.
>
> And the melody of your lyres, I will not hear.
>
> 24 But let justice roll like the waters,
>
> and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
>
> 25 Did you bring near to me sacrifices and offerings
>
> in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?â€•

Of course, we can tell by the way it is written that the answer is supposed to be no, they did not offer God animal sacrifices in the wilderness for forty years. Amos is saying that the Israelites didnâ€™t offer sacrifices in the wilderness and that God didnâ€™t want them to offer sacrifices now â€“ in Amosâ€™s own day.

Now here is where the understanding behind the writings of the Pentateuch will be very important because as we know, this question in Amos flies in the face of some of the writings in the Pentateuch.

I say some of the writings because this statement in Amos does seem to coincide with Numbers 11:4, 6, 11, and 13, which reads,

> 4 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: â€œWho will give us meat to eat?â€¦ 6 but now our whole being *is* dried up; *there is* nothing at all except this manna *before* our eyes!â€•
>
> 11 And Moses said to the Lordâ€¦
>
> 13 â€œWhere am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, â€˜Give us meat, that we may eat.'â€•

Obviously, if the Israelites had brought their flocks and herds with them (as it says in Exodus 12:38), why the cry for meat? Why did they only see manna? And how would they perform animal sacrifice withoutâ€¦animals?

Next, letâ€™s look at Micah 6: 6-7 which reads,

> 6 With what shall I come before the Lord,
> *And* bow myself before the High God?
> Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
> With calves a year old?
> 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
> Ten thousand rivers of oil?

Again, the rhetorical answer is no, God is not pleased with animal sacrifice. Micah, just like Amos, goes on to promote righteousness as the proper sacrifice to God.

Next, we have Hosea 5:5-6 reads,

> 5The pride of Israel testifies to his face;
> Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity;
> Judah also stumbles with them.
>
> 6 With their flocks and herds
> They shall go to seek the Lord,
> But they will not find *Him;*
> He has withdrawn Himself from them.

And Hosea 6:6

> 6 For I desire loyalty and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

You see, Godâ€™s acceptable sacrifice, according to Hosea 14:2 is the sacrifice of our lips!

And Psalm 51: 16-17 reads,

> 15 My Lord, open my lips,
>
> and my mouth will declare your praise.
>
> 16 For you are not pleased with sacrifice
>
> and were I to give a burnt offering you would not delight.
>
> 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken breath.
>
> A heart that is broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise.

Many scholars believe this was written before the exile and that the last 2 verses of Psalm 51, verses 18 and 19, were added later â€“ after the temple was destroyed. Verses 18 and 19 are a de-radicalization of the Psalmists message. 1 Clement 18, written in the 1st century BCE quotes this whole Psalm without verses 18 and 19.

Psalm 40 says something similar to Psalm 51.

Psalm 40:6-8 reads,

> 6 Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
> My ears You have opened.
> Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
> 7 Then I said, â€œBehold, I come;
> In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
> 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God,
> And Your law *is* within my heart.â€•

Next, we have an important verse in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 7: 21-23 reads,

> 21 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: â€œAdd your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and [you] eat [the] meat. 22 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. 23 But this is what I commanded them, saying, â€˜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.'â€•

So here, Jeremiah is delivering the message that God is specifically denying having commanded the Israelites to offer sacrifices when they came out of Egypt. This is clearly contrary to story told through most of the Pentateuch, but it is very much in harmony with what we read in Numbers 11 and Amos 5:25. In a past video, we showed that here in Jeremiah 7, Jeremiah is specifically arguing against the sacrifice of animals in the temple, along with other evils, and telling the people in that the temple would be destroyed as a result. Clearly, Jeremiah wasnâ€™t trying to nitpick over exactly when God commanded animal sacrifices; he was saying that God didnâ€™t command animal sacrifices and that God doesnâ€™t want animal sacrifices. The only reason Jeremiah specified the Exodus is because that is the time the priests pointed to as being when God commanded animal sacrifices. And Jeremiah was saying they were wrong. Interestingly, Jesus quoted Jeremiah 7 when cleansing the temple in his day, but that is a subject for another article. In fact, it is the subject of this video: â€œThe Historical Jesus and the Disturbance in the Temple (New Moon study) â€“ Jun 16, 2018 â€“ Trent Wildeâ€œ

Isaiah 66 is the last verse we will read today, although this is not nearly the end of the evidence that God is against animal sacrifice. Isaiah 66:3-4 reads,

> 3â€œHe who kills a bull *is as if* he slays a man;
> He who sacrifices a lamb, *as if* he breaks a dogâ€™s neck;
> He who offers a grain offering, *as if he offers* swineâ€™s blood;

He who burns incense, *as if* he blesses an idol.
Just as they have chosen their own ways,
And their soul delights in their abominations,
4 So will I choose their delusions,
And bring their fears on them;
Because, when I called, no one answered,
When I spoke they did not hear;
But they did evil before My eyes,
And chose *that* in which I do not delight.â€•

Well, it canâ€™t get more plain than that right there. When we do as Ellen White admonished, that is, sink the shaft deep into the mine of truth, that we may obtain the celestial gold,â€”that wisdom which will make us wise unto salvation, we can see that animal sacrifice was never originated by God, and that the sacrifices God desires are prayer (Psalm 141:2), praise (Hebrews 13:15), people (those we bring to the Lord â€“ see Romans 15:15-16), our own bodies, alive, holy, and pleasing to God (see Romans 12), sharing what you have (1 Peter 2:5 and Hebrews 13:15-16), financial offerings (as seen in Philippians 2:17), and the Lordâ€™s supper (in 1 Corinthians 9, 10, and 11), among other beautiful sacrifices. Jesus sacrificed himself in all these same ways too. God was not pleased with animal sacrifices, nor was He pleased with the torture and death of His Son.

Like the innocent lambs wrongly sacrificed in the temple, the innocent Jesus was wrongly put to death as well. And this is why the sacrifice of these poor animals is such a fitting type, or foreshadowing, of the death of Jesus. And this is how Jesusâ€™ Sacrifice Relates to Animal Sacrifice. We know that the Gospel of John, 1 Corinthians, 1 Peter, and the book of Revelation all relate Jesus to a sacrificial lamb. These writings use the lamb as a symbol of an innocent, spotless, sinless, creature that suffered an unjust death at the hands of sinners. We know from the writings in the New Testament that Jesusâ€™ death was considered a terrible thing (see Acts 2: 36-37; Acts 7:51-53; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8). The good that comes from the crucifixion isnâ€™t the crucifixion itself, it is the lessons we can learn from the crucifixion, teaching us to abandon sin once and for all. It is the same thing with the sacrificial animals. Their deaths were undeserved, unwanted by God, and simply terrible. Yet, if the Israelites had listened to the prophets, God would have been able to use the horrible act of killing these animals as the means of convicting the Israelites of the terribleness of sin. They could have learned that sin destroys not only the guilty, but the innocent as well. Sometimes people think that in order for God to use something as a type or a symbol, it means God must have ordained that thing. But this isnâ€™t the case. God used the polygamous family of Abraham as a symbol for the early followers of Jesus and other Jewish groups (see Galatians 4) but that doesnâ€™t meant that God ordained polygamy. According to all the prophets we have quoted in this video, God did not orchestrate animal sacrifice and in fact, he hated it. And as we saw last week and in previous videos, God didnâ€™t orchestrate the death of Jesus either â€“ and he hated it as well. Jesus really was like a poor sacrificial victim. Yet, God is able to use even the most terrible things to teach us the most important lessons. Letâ€™s make sure we donâ€™t miss it.