

A REVELATION OF.....

**THE SEVEN
REVELATIONS OF
'THE LAMB'**

**The progressive revelation of the character
and role of Jesus from Genesis to Revelation.**

**ONE OF A SERIES OF REVELATIONS ON VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF SCRIPTURE, AS INSPIRED BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT.**

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A NOTE FROM DAVID.....

You never know where God is going to take you!

Our family is about to be 'taken' to a new place in the natural, shifting to another, nearby city. It will be a new challenge for us, living in a different socio-economic area and assisting in looking after children who have had severe problems in life.

In the spiritual too, I was wondering what to do next, as I came to the end of correcting and editing my final draft of the preceding work in this series, 'A Revelation of ... The 3 Kingdom Ages of God'. As I was finalising the last 5 of 155 pages, the Lord just put into my mind this revelation about the Lamb. So now I have my next task!

Here in New Zealand, we have 40 million sheep but only 4 million people! Or 10 sheep per person! Once upon a time we had 60 million sheep and 3 million people. But the prices, particularly for wool have deteriorated over the years. So now, we have increased numbers of cows and fewer sheep.

This aside, sheep, therefore lambs too, play an important part in our economy. As they do in that of God. For the lovely, innocent, fluffy, white, playful lamb, that naturally attracts us humans to it, is used in the Bible as a picture, or type of Jesus. Before He came, while He was here, and after He departed to be again with His father, the lamb is used as a simile or description of Him.

In our country, as there are so many lambs, they tend to become commonplace and undervalued, through familiarity. I pray that this may never be the case with Jesus, the Lamb of God who died to save the world.

May God bless you, and you bless God.

His servant and yours,

David Tait

PART 1: THE BACKGROUND

DEFINITION OF TERMS

LAMB — (1.) Heb. kebes, a male lamb from the first to the third year. Offered daily at the morning and the evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:38–42), on the Sabbath day (Num. 28:9), at the feast of the New Moon (28:11), of Trumpets (29:2), of Tabernacles (13–40), of Pentecost (Lev. 23:18–20), and of the Passover (Ex. 12:5), and on many other occasions (1 Chr. 29:21; 2 Chr. 29:21; Lev. 9:3; 14:10–25).

(2.) Heb. taleh, a young sucking lamb (1 Sam. 7:9; Isa. 65:25). In the symbolical language of Scripture the lamb is the type of meekness and innocence (Isa. 11:6; 65:25; Luke 10:3; John 21:15).

The lamb was a symbol of Christ (Gen. 4:4; Ex. 12:3; 29:38; Isa. 16:1; 53:7; John 1:36; Rev. 13:8).

Christ is called the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36), as the great sacrifice of which the former sacrifices were only types (Num. 6:12; Lev. 14:12–17; Isa. 53:7; 1 Cor. 5:7). 1

LAMB OF GOD. This expression occurs twice only in the NT (Jn. 1:29, 36). The word *amnos* is also found in Acts 8:32 and 1 Pet. 1:19, *arnos* occurs in Lk. 10:3, and *arnion* is found once in Jn. 21:15 and twenty-eight times in Revelation. The words ‘Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn. 1:29) are attributed to John the Baptist when acclaiming Jesus. Many possible interpretations of the word ‘lamb’ have been canvassed.

Some suggest that it refers to the lamb of the sin-offering, and the phrase ‘who takes away the sin of the world’ lends support to this. The fact that propitiatory ideas do not seem to be found elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel is not a sufficient reason for rejecting this.

Others believe there is a reference to the paschal lamb. The Jewish festivals have great significance in John, and Jn. 19:36 may well be alluding to the lamb of the Passover. But this would not explain the whole phrase, as the paschal lamb did not take away sins.

Some maintain that we have here a reference to the suffering servant of Is. 53. The word *amnos* occurs in the LXX of Is. 53:7. The Baptist quoted from Is. 40 the day before and he may have been meditating on those chapters. The sin-bearing function is clear in Is. 53. The suggestion that *amnos* is a mistranslation of the Aramaic *ṭalyaḡō* meaning ‘servant’ is ingenious, but it has not been proved.

Another possible reference is to the horned ram who led the flock. The ‘lamb of God’ would thus be the same as the ‘king of Israel’. This view is acceptable only if it is claimed that ho airoyn teyn hamartian has no propitiatory meaning.

It seems likely that, whatever the Baptist intended, the Evangelist intended his readers to think of the lamb offered in the Temple, the paschal lamb, and the suffering servant. The 'Lamb of God' also reminds us of God's provision of a lamb for Abraham to sacrifice (Gn. 22:8, 13-14).

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Arndt; J. Jeremias, *TDNT* 1, pp. 338-340; R. Tuente, *NIDNTT* 2, pp. 410-414; standard commentaries on John's Gospel; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1953, pp. 230-238; L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*³, 1965, pp. 129ff. R.E.N. 2

SACRIFICE — The offering up of sacrifices is to be regarded as a divine institution. It did not originate with man. God himself appointed it as the mode in which acceptable worship was to be offered to him by guilty man. The language and the idea of sacrifice pervade the whole Bible.

Sacrifices were offered in the ante-diluvian age. The Lord clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of animals, which in all probability had been offered in sacrifice (Gen. 3:21). Abel offered a sacrifice "of the firstlings of his flock" (4:4; Heb. 11:4). A distinction also was made between clean and unclean animals, which there is every reason to believe had reference to the offering up of sacrifices (Gen. 7:2, 8), because animals were not given to man as food till after the Flood.

The same practice is continued down through the patriarchal age (Gen. 8:20; 12:7; 13:4, 18; 15:9-11; 22:1-18, etc.). In the Mosaic period of Old Testament history definite laws were prescribed by God regarding the different kinds of sacrifices that were to be offered and the manner in which the offering was to be made. The offering of stated sacrifices became indeed a prominent and distinctive feature of the whole period (Ex. 12:3-27; Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 9:2-14). (See ALTAR.)

We learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews that sacrifices had in themselves no value or efficacy. They were only the "shadow of good things to come," and pointed the worshippers forward to the coming of the great High Priest, who, in the fullness of the time, "was offered once for all to bear the sin of many." Sacrifices belonged to a temporary economy, to a system of types and emblems which served their purposes and have now passed away. The "one sacrifice for sins" hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Sacrifices were of two kinds: 1. Unbloody, such as (1) first-fruits and tithes; (2) meat and drink-offerings; and (3) incense. 2. Bloody, such as (1) burnt-offerings; (2) peace-offerings; and (3) sin and trespass offerings. (See OFFERINGS.) 1

SACRIFICE AND OFFERING.

I. In the Old Testament

a. Terms

The OT has no general word for ‘sacrifice’, except the rather sparsely used *qorbān*, ‘that which is brought near’ (*qrb*), which is practically confined to the levitical literature. (AV renders this term ‘Corban’ in the single NT reference of Mk. 7:11.) *iššêh* may also serve this purpose in the laws, but it is debated whether it should not be limited to ‘fire-offerings’ (‘*ēš*’) (but cf. Lv. 24:9). The other frequently used words describe particular kinds of sacrifice, and are derived either from the mode of sacrifice, as *zeḅaḥ* (sacrifice), ‘that which is slain, (*zāḅaḥ*), and ‘*ôlâ* (burnt-offering), ‘that which goes up’, or from its purpose, as ‘*āšām* (guilt-offering), ‘for guilt’ (‘*āšām*), and *ḥaṭṭā’t* (sin-offering), ‘for sin’ (*ḥaṭṭā’t*). These may be distinguished in part by the disposal of the victim, whether wholly burnt (‘*ôlâ*, Lv. 1), or eaten by priests and worshippers together (*zeḅaḥ*, Lv. 3), or eaten by the priests alone (*ḥaṭṭā’t* and ‘*āšām*, Lv. 4-5). For the distinction of ‘*ôlâ* and *zeḅaḥ*, see Dt. 12:27 (cf. Je. 7:21, where the prophet ironically suggests an obliteration of the distinction).

Also included under *qorbān* were the non-blood offerings ‘offering, oblation’, the cereal-offering (*minḥâ*, Lv. 2), the firstfruits (*rē’šîṭ bikkûfîm*), the sheaf of 16 Nisan, the dough of the Feast of Weeks, and the tithes.

b. Theories of the beginnings

Sacrifice was not confined to Israel among the nations of antiquity (cf. Jdg. 16:23; 1 Sa. 6:4; 2 Ki. 3:27; 5:17), and many parallels from surrounding nations have been adduced in explanation of Israelite sacrifice. W. R. Smith (‘Sacrifice’, *EBR*⁹, 21, 1886, pp. 132-138; *The Religion of the Semites*, 1889) constructed, from the pre-Islamic nomadic Arabs, a hypothetical ‘Semite’, to whom the sacrificial meal was the earliest form, and the communion of the worshippers and the deity the controlling idea. The Pan-Babylonian movement (H. Winckler, A. Jeremias, from c. 1900 onwards) looked to the higher civilization of Mesopotamia, and to the developed ritual of propitiatory sacrifice practised there.

R. Dussaud preferred a Canaanite background, and found parallels first in the Carthaginian sacrificial tariffs (*Le sacrifice en Israel et chez les Phéniciens*, 1914; *Les origines canaéennes du sacrifice israélite*, 1921), and later in the Ras Shamra texts (*Les découvertes de Ras Shamra et l’Ancien Testament*, 1937). Here the materials of ancient Ugarit (c. 1400 BC) indicated a developed ritual of sacrifices bearing names similar to those of the OT. The *šrp* was a burnt-offering, the *dbḥ*, a slain-offering for a meal, the *šlm*, possibly a propitiatory sacrifice, and the ‘*aṭm*, the equivalent of the Heb. ‘*āšām*. (These were not Dussaud’s identifications.) The myth and ritual school (S. H. Hooke, *The Origins of Early Semitic Ritual*, 1938; I. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, 1943) stressed this sedentary background and laid weight on the substitutionary role of the suffering king in the cult.

This was not convincing to A. Alt, who had earlier claimed (*Der Gott der Väter*, 1929, now in *Essays on OT History and Religion*, 1966, pp. 1-77) that the real antecedents of Israelite faith were to be sought rather among the nomad Patriarchs, who had practised a form of religion centering in the god of the head of the clan (the ‘God of Abraham’, the ‘God of Isaac’, the ‘God of Jacob’). V. Maag (‘Der Hirte Israels’, *Schweizerische*

Theologische Umschau 28, 1958, pp. 2-28) took this further by noticing the dominance of the shepherd metaphor in the descriptions of this God, and from a background of the migrant shepherd cultures of the Asiatic steppes, suggested that their sacrifice was the fellowship meal in which the god took over the responsibility of the shed blood, which would otherwise have exacted vengeance (cf. A. E. Jensen, 'Über das Töten als kulturgeschichtliche Erscheinung', *Paideuma* 4, 1950, pp. 23-38; H. Baumann, 'Nyama, die Rachemacht', *ibid.*, pp. 191-230). Israelite religion, as it appears in the OT, is a syncretism in which the nomadic *zeḇaḥ* sacrifice exists alongside of gift sacrifices of the 'ôlâ type, which come in from the sedentary Canaanite side (V. Maag, *VT* 6, 1956, pp. 10-18).

Such a view finds place for both the sedentary and nomadic aspects, but becomes subjective when applied to particular OT narratives. The OT depicts early Israel less as nomadic than as a people in process of sedentarization. The Patriarchs already have the larger bovines and engage in some agriculture, and it may well be that a closer parallel to Hebrew sacrifice may be found among a tribe such as the African Nuer, whose sacrifice, as described by E. Evans-Pritchard (*Nuer Religion*, 1956) involved the offering of an ox in substitution for sin. The Wellhausen school, which traced an evolution from a joyous sacrificial meal in the earlier time to sin-offerings and guilt-offerings only in the post-exilic period (J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 1885; W. R. Smith, *op.cit.*), regarded the connection of sacrifice with sin as the latest element. But this is no longer probable (cf. the writer's *Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel*, 1963), as the following historical sketch will show.

c. The development in the history

1. *Patriarchal*. It is significant that the first sacrifices mentioned in Gn. were not *z^cbâḥîm* meals, but the gift-offerings of Cain and Abel (*minḥâ*, Gn. 4:3-4), and the burnt-offering of Noah ('ôlâ, Gn. 8:20; we have here the first reference to an altar). Patriarchal altars are often described (e.g. Gn. 12:6-8), but unfortunately details as to the type of sacrifice are lacking. Maag thinks of the *zeḇaḥ* communion meal, but T. C. Vriezen (*An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 1958, p. 26) thinks the 'ôlâ more typical. Gn. 22 gives some support to the latter position. Isaac knows that Abraham is in the habit of offering 'ôlâ and that a lamb is the likely victim (v. 7). Sacrificial meals do, however, seal covenants (Gn. 31:54, first use of *zeḇaḥ*) but not all covenants are of this type. Gn. 15:9-11 is best understood as a purificatory ritual like that of the Hittite text translated by O. Masson (*RHR* 137, 1950, pp. 5-25; cf. O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 1952, p. 151).

As to the motives of sacrifice in this period, honouring of God and thanksgiving for his goodness were prominent, but more solemn thoughts cannot be ruled out. Noah's offering is to be seen, not simply as a thank-offering for deliverance, but as an expiation or atonement. When Jacob goes to Egypt (Gn. 46:1), he pauses to seek God's will, and offers sacrifices (*zeḇaḥ*), which were possibly expiatory (cf. I. Rost, *VTSupp* 7, 1960, p. 354; *ZDPV* 66, 1943, pp. 205-216). In Egypt Israel is called to a solemn sacrifice in the wilderness (Ex. 5:3, *zeḇaḥ*) which required animal victims (Ex. 10:25-26) and was distinguished from any offered by the Egyptians (Ex. 8:26).

2. *Tribal*. The establishment of Israel as a tribal organization, which Noth thinks of as coming into being only on the soil of Palestine in the time of the Judges (*cf. The History of Israel*, 1958), is taken back by strong biblical tradition to the time of Moses. Chief among tribal occasions were the three festivals, at which sacrifice was to be offered: 'none shall appear before me empty-handed' (Ex. 23:15). The sacrifices we know best were those of the *Passover and the *covenant. The Passover combined the elements of sacrifice as an apotropaic and sacrifice as a communion meal. Secure in the knowledge that the blood had been shed to ward off evil, the members of each family could sit down to joyful fellowship (Ex. 12; Jos. 5:5-12). Similar elements probably entered into the covenant sacrifice and its renewals (Ex. 24:1-8; Dt. 27:1ff.; Jos. 8:30ff.; 24; *cf. Ps. 50:5*). The blood-sprinkling purified the covenant and the eating of the meal marked its consummation.

In addition, many other sacrifices both national and local were offered. Typical of national sacrifices were those in times of disaster or war (Jdg. 20:26; 21:4; 1 Sa. 7:9), when penitence seems to have been the main note (*cf. Jdg. 2:1-5*). Dedications and new beginnings were marked by sacrifice (Jdg. 6:28; Ex. 32:6; 1 Sa. 6:14; 11:15; 2 Sa.6:17), as were individual occasions of celebration (1 Sa. 1:3), intercession (Nu. 23:1ff.), and perhaps hospitality (Ex. 18:12).

3. *Monarchic*. The building of the Temple by Solomon provided opportunity for initiatory (1 Ki. 8:62ff.) and regular sacrifices (1 Ki. 9:25), but as the sources are books of 'kings' they speak rather of royal participation (*cf. 2 Ki. 16:10ff.*) than of that of the people. That the everyday cult was in progress, however, is attested by such a verse as 2 Ki. 12:16, and by the frequent mention of sacrifice in the prophets and psalms. The many favourable references in the latter show that the condemnations of the former are not to be taken in an absolute sense, as if prophet and priest were opposed. The prophets object less to the cult itself than to the magic-working ideas borrowed from the fertility cults (Am. 4:4-5; Is. 1:11-16), and to such innovations as idolatry and child sacrifice introduced by apostatizing rulers (Je. 19:4; Ezk. 16:21).

An Isaiah can receive his call in the Temple (Is. 6), and a Jeremiah or an Ezekiel can find a place for a purified cult in the future (Je. 17:26; Ezk. 40-48). This is also the predominant feeling of the psalmists, who constantly speak of their sacrifices of thanksgiving in payment of their vows (*e.g. Ps. 66:13-15*). Expressions of penitence and the joy of forgiveness are also present (Pss. 32; 51) and, although sacrifice is not often mentioned in these contexts, it is probably to be assumed from the fact that forgiveness is experienced in the Temple (Ps. 65:1-5). While there is no need to make all such references post-exilic, the prophets' complaint that penitence did not often enough accompany sacrifice in the late kingdom period should also be borne in mind.

4. *Post-exilic*. The disaster of the Exile is usually seen as resulting in a deeper sense of sin, and no doubt this is true (*cf. 2 Ki. 17:7ff.; Ne. 9*), but not in the sense of Wellhausen that only then could the expiatory note of Lv. 1-7 and Lv. 16 have entered Israelite religion. References to sacrifice in the non-levitical writings before and after the Exile, although usually too fragmentary to decide the issue, give little support to such an evolution. Joy, as well as penitence, continues to characterize sacrifice (Ezr. 6:16-18; Ne.

8:9ff.). Temple and cult are valued (Hg. 1-2; Joel 2:14, and especially Chronicles), but only as they are the vehicles of sincere worship (Mal. 1:6ff.; 3:3ff.). Apocalyptic and Wisdom literature take the cult for granted (Dn. 9:21, 27; Ec. 5:4; 9:2) and also continue the prophetic moral emphasis (Ec. 5:1; Pr. 15:8).

d. The regulations of the laws

Laws for sacrifice are scattered through all the codes (Ex. 20:24ff.; 34:25ff.; Lv. 17; 19:5ff.; Nu. 15; Dt. 12, *etc.*), but the sacrificial ‘torah’ *par excellence* is Lv. 1-7. Chs. 1-5 deal in turn with the burnt-offering (‘ôlâ), cereal-offering (minhâ), peace-offering (zebah), sin-offering (ḥaṭṭâ’t) and guilt-offering (‘āšām), while chs. 6-7 give additional regulations for all five—6:8-13 (burnt); 6:14-18 (cereal); 6:24-30 (sin); 7:1-10 (guilt); 7:11ff. (peace). From these and other references the following synthetic account is compiled.

1. *The materials.* The sacrificial victim had to be taken from the clean animals and birds (Gn. 8:20), and could be bullock, goat, sheep, dove or pigeon (*cf.* Gn. 15:9), but not camel or ass (Ex. 13:13) (*Clean and Unclean). These provisions are not to be traced to the idea of sacrifice as ‘food for the gods’ (*viz.* that the gods ate what man ate)—as might be suggested by Lv. 3:11; 21:6; Ezk. 44:7—for fish (Lv. 11:9) and wild animals (Dt. 12:22) could be eaten but not sacrificed. The principle seems rather to have been that of property (*cf.* 2 Sa. 24:24), the wild animals being regarded as in some sense already God’s (Ps. 50:9ff.; *cf.* Is. 40:16), while the domestic animals had become man’s by his labours (Gn. 22:13 is only apparently an exception), and were in a kind of ‘biotic rapport’ with him. This was even more clearly the case with the non-blood offerings, which had been produced by ‘the sweat of his brow’ (cereals, flour, oil, wine, *etc.*), and were also staple articles of the kitchen. Property unlawfully acquired was not acceptable (Dt. 23:18).

The principle of ‘the best for God’ was observed throughout—as to sex, males being preferred to females (Lv. 1:3; but *cf.* Lv. 3:1; Gn. 15:9; 1 Sa. 6:14; 16:2); as to age, maturity being especially valuable (1 Sa. 1:24); as to physical perfection, ‘without blemish’ being constantly emphasized (Lv. 1:3; 3:1; Dt. 15:21; 17:1; 22:17-25; *cf.* Mal. 1:6ff., but note the exception for free-will offerings Lv. 22:23); and in some cases as to colour, red being chosen (Nu. 19:2), perhaps as representing blood (*cf.* prehistoric cave paintings of animals). The difference between Israel and her neighbours is clearly seen in the rejection of the extension of this principle to what might be thought its logical climax in the human first-born. The child sacrifice, which was present in the late kingdom (2 Ki. 21:6), and the human sacrifices occasionally reported of earlier times (Jdg. 11:29ff.), were from outside influences, and were condemned by prophet (Je. 7:31ff.), precept (Lv. 20:4) and example (Gn. 22). Ex. 22:29b is clearly to be interpreted by Ex. 34:19-20 and Ex. 13:12-16. The principle of substitution is present, not only in this replacing of the human first-born by an animal victim but in the provision given to the poor to offer the cheaper doves for a sin-offering (Lv. 5:7) and, if even this was too much, a cereal-offering (Lv. 5:11). The words ‘such as he can afford’ (Lv. 14:22, *etc.*) are very significant here.

Libations of oil (Gn. 28:18), wine (Gn. 35:14) and water (?1 Sa. 7:6) seem to have had a place in the cult, but only the wine-offerings are referred to in the basic laws (Nu.

28:7, *etc.*). The prohibition of leaven and honey (with some exceptions), and possibly also of milk, is probably to be put down to their liability to putrefaction. For the opposite reason salt was probably added to the sacrifices, because of its well-known preservative qualities (mentioned only in Lv. 2:13 and Ezk. 43:24, but *cf.* Mk. 9:49). *Incense (l^hbônâ, q^htôreṭ) played a considerable role, both as an independent offering (Ex. 30:7, *cf.* the instructions for its making in vv. 34-38) and as an accompaniment of the cereal-offering (Lv. 2). Many scholars, doubting its early use on the ground that it was neither edible nor home-grown property (Je. 6:20), think q^htôreṭ in the historical books describes the burning of the fat (qtr) rather than incense, but this is not certain. (See N. H. Snaith, *IB*, 3, 1954, p. 40, and J. A. Montgomery, *ICC, Kings*, 1952, p. 104, also *VT* 10, 1960, pp. 113-129.)

2. *The occasions.* The regulations cover both national and individual offerings, and daily and festival occasions. The first public sacrifices with good attestation are the seasonal ones, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits or Weeks and Ingathering or *Tabernacles (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:18-23; Dt. 16). With the first the *Passover was early connected (Jos. 5:10-12), and with the last, in all probability, covenant renewal ceremonies (*cf.* Ex. 24; Dt. 31:10ff.; Jos. 24) and possibly new year and atoning rites (*cf.* Lv. 23:27ff.) (*Pentecost.) A full tariff of sacrifices for these, and for additional observances, monthly (new moon), weekly (sabbath) and daily (morning and evening), is found in Nu. 28-29, and may be set out in tabular form (see the chart on p. 1046).

The date of the beginning of the twice-daily burnt-offering is controverted, and certainty is difficult to arrive at, because of the ambiguous nature of minhâ for both cereal- and burnt-offerings. (See the chart on p. 1050.) 'ôlâ and minhâ are also referred to without time notes in 1 Sa. 3:14; Je. 14:12; and Ps. 20:3, and continual 'ôlôt and minhôt in Ezr. 3:3ff. and Ne. 10:33.

Sacrifices of a more private nature were the Passover, for which the unit was the family (Ex. 12; *cf.* 1 Sa. 20:6, but this was a new moon, not a full moon), and individual sacrifices, such as those in fulfilment of a vow (1 Sa. 1:3, *cf.* v. 21; 2 Sa. 15:7ff.), or in confirmation of a treaty (Gn. 31:54), veneration of God (Jdg. 13:19), personal dedication (1 Ki. 3:4), consecration (1 Sa. 16:3) or expiation (2 Sa. 24:17ff.). Whether the extending of hospitality to a guest was always regarded as a sacrificial occasion is not clear (Gn. 18; Nu. 22:40; 1 Sa. 28:24 may not have involved altar rites, but *cf.* 1 Sa. 9). Additional occasions mentioned in the laws are the cleansing of the leper (Lv. 14), purification after child-birth (Lv. 12), the consecration of a priest (Lv. 8-9) or a Levite (Nu. 8), and the release of a Nazirite from his vows (Nu. 6). Less frequent sacrifices were those of sanctuary dedication (2 Sa. 6:13; 1 Ki. 8:5ff.; Ezk. 43:18ff.; Ezr. 3:2ff.), royal coronations (1 Sa. 11:15; 1 Ki. 1:9), and days of national penitence (Jdg. 20:26; 1 Sa. 7) or preparation for battle (1 Sa. 13:8ff.; Ps. 20).

Among seasonal offerings brought annually in recognition of God's share in productivity were firstlings and firstfruits (Ex. 13; 23:19; Dt. 15:19ff.; 18:4; 26; Nu. 18; *cf.* Gn. 4:3-4; 1 Sa. 10:3; 2 Ki. 4:42), *tithes, and the offerings of the first sheaf (Lv. 23:9ff.) and the first dough (Nu. 15:18-21; Ezk. 44:30; *cf.* Lv. 23:15ff.). Their purpose was probably not to consecrate the rest of the crop, but to deconsecrate it. All was God's

until the first portion had been offered and accepted in lieu of the whole. Only then was the restriction on the human use of the remainder removed (Lv. 23:14, cf. 19:23-25). Even the portion brought was usually presented only in token at the altar, and afterwards taken away for the use of the priests or for a sacrificial meal. This was also the final fate of the weekly *showbread.

3. *The ritual.* The major altar sacrifices of Lv. 1-5 are described in a framework of a stereotyped ritual comprising six acts, of which three belong to the worshipper and three to the priest. They may be illustrated from the 'ôlâ and the zebaḥ (cf. R. Rendtorff, *Die Gesetze in der Priesterschrift*, 1954). (See the chart on p. 1051.) The provisions for the sin-offering, several times repeated for various classes (Lv. 4:1-12, 13-21, 22-26, 27-31), follow the same scheme, except in minor details. The burnt-offering of a bird (Lv. 1:14-17) and the cereal-offering (Lv. 2) of necessity present greater variations, but are not entirely dissimilar. A similar formula for the guilt-offering is not given (cf., however, 7:1-7), but it may be understood as coming under the law of the sin-offering (Lv. 7:7).

(i) The worshipper brings near (hiqrîḥ) his offering (also hēḥî', 'āsâh). The place of the sacrifice is the tabernacle forecourt on the N side of the altar (for burnt-, sin- and guilt-offerings, but not for the more numerous peace-offerings), although in earlier times it may have been the door of the tabernacle (Lv. 17:4), or local sanctuary (1 Sa. 2:12ff.), or a rough altar of stone or earth (Ex. 20:24ff.) or a rock (1 Sa. 6:14) or pillar (Gn. 28:18). Killing on the altar, although implied by Gn. 22:9 and Ex. 20:24 (Ps. 118:27 is corrupt), is not normal in the cult.

(ii) He lays (sāmak) his hands, or in the biblical period more probably one hand (cf. Nu. 27:18), upon the victim, and possibly confesses his sin. This latter is mentioned, however, only in connection with the scapegoat, where the blood was not shed (Lv. 16:21) and with some sin-offerings (Lv. 5:5) and guilt-offerings (Nu. 5:7) (cf., however, Dt. 26:3; Jos. 7:19-20), so that the s^mmîkâ cannot certainly be claimed as a transferring of sin. On the other hand, it seems inadequate to regard it simply as an identification by the owner of his property, for such an identification is not made with the non-blood sacrifices, where it would have been equally appropriate. Representation, if not transference, seems to be clearly involved (cf. the use of the same word for the commissioning of Joshua (Nu. 27:18) and the Levites (Nu. 8:10) and the stoning of a blasphemer (Lv. 24:13f.)). See P. Volz, *ZAW* 21, 1901, pp. 93-100, and for an opposite view J. C. Matthes, *ibid.* 23, 1903, pp. 97-119.

(iii) The slaughtering (šāḥat) is performed by the worshipper, except for the national offerings (Lv. 16:11; 2 Ch. 29:24). In the non-levitical literature the verb zāḥaḥ is used, but this may have referred to the subsequent cutting up of the sacrifice, and the laying of the parts on the altar (mizbēaḥ, not mišḥat) (so K. Galling, *Der Altar*, 1925, pp. 56ff.). For this, however, nṯḥ is normally used (1 Ki. 18:23; Lv. 1:6), and zāḥaḥ describes rather the z^cbāḥîm sacrifices, except for a few passages (Ex. 20:24; 1 Ki. 3:4; cf. 2 Ki. 10:18ff.) where it occurs with 'ôlôt. These are perhaps to be put down to a loose use of the verb, which in the cognate languages can even be used of vegetable offerings, and in the Piël in Heb. seems to be used quite generally for the whole round of the (usually apostate) cult. It is not certain, then, that every use of zebaḥ was sacrificial, or that meat could be eaten

only on occasions of sacrifice, although this was often the case in antiquity (*cf.* the problem of the idol-meat at Corinth) (see N. H. Snaith, *VT* 25, 1975, pp. 242-246).

(iv) The manipulation (*zāraq*) of the blood is in the hands of the priest, who collects it in a basin and dashes it against the NE and SW corners of the altar in such a way that all four sides are spattered. This takes place with the animal burnt-offerings (Lv. 1), peace-offerings (Lv. 3) and guilt-offerings (Lv. 7:2), but not with the burnt-offering of birds (Lv. 1:15), where the quantity of blood was insufficient, and so was drained out on the side of the altar. The sin-offerings (Lv. 4) uses a different set of verbs, *hizzâ* ('sprinkle') or *nātan* ('put') according to whether the offering is of primary or secondary rank (see below). The remainder of the blood is then poured out (*šāpak*) at the base of the altar. The blood rite is referred to in the historical books only in 2 Ki. 16:15 (but *cf.* 1 Sa. 14:31-35; Ex. 24:6-8). (See Th. C. Vriezen, *OTS* 7, 1950, pp. 201-235; D. J. McCarthy, *JBL* 88, 1969, pp. 166-176; 92, 1973, pp. 205-210; N. H. Snaith, *ExpT* 82, 1970-71, pp. 23f.)

(v) Some burning (*hiqîr*) took place with all the sacrifices. Not only the blood but also the fat belonged to God, and this was first burnt (Gn. 4:4; 1 Sa. 2:16). This was not the fat in general, but specifically the fat of the kidneys, liver and intestines. From the peace-, sin- and guilt-offerings only this was burnt, from the cereal-offerings a portion called the *'azkārâ* was separated off and burnt, but the burnt-offering was wholly burnt except for the skin, which became the perquisite of the priests (Lv. 7:8). A different kind of burning (*šārap*) away from the altar was the fate of the primary rank sin-offerings. In this burning the skin was also included.

(vi) The remaining portions of the sacrifice were eaten (*'ākal*) in a sacrificial meal, either by the priests and worshippers together (peace-offering), or by the priests and their families, or by the priests alone. Priestly food was classified as either holy or most holy. The former included the peace-offerings (Lv. 10:14; 22:10ff.) and firstfruits and tithes (Nu. 18:13), and could be eaten by the priest's family in any clean place, but the latter included the sin-offerings (Lv. 6:26), guilt-offerings (Lv. 7:6), cereal-offerings (Lv. 6:16), and showbread (Lv. 24:9), and could be eaten only by the priests themselves, and within the Temple precincts. The people's sacrificial meal from the peace-offering was the popular accompaniment of local worship in early times (1 Sa. 1; 9), but with the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem (*cf.* Dt. 12) tended to recede before the formal aspects of worship. As late as Ezk. 46:21-24, however, provision continued to be made for it.

4. *The kinds.* (i) *'ôlâ*. The burnt-offering seems to have a better claim to be regarded as the typical Hebrew sacrifice than the *zebah* favoured by the Wellhausen school. It is present from the beginning (?Gn. 4; 8:20; 22:2; Ex. 10:25; 18:12; Jdg. 6:26; 13:16), early became a regular rite (1 Ki. 9:25; *cf.* 1 Ki. 10:5), was never omitted on great occasions (1 Ki. 3:4; Jos. 8:31), and retained its dominant role to the latest times (Ezk. 43:18; Ezr. 3:2-4) (see R. Rendtorff, *Studien zur Geschichte des Opfers im alten Israel*, 1967). Whatever may be said for Robertson Smith's view of a primary peace-offering, from which the burnt-offering later developed, as far as the OT is concerned it is from the *'ôlâ* that the *minhâ*, *'āšām*, *ḥattā'î* and even *š'lamîm* seem to have arisen. The *kāfil* referred to five

times (1 Sa. 7:9; Ps. 51:19; Dt. 33:10; *cf.* Dt. 13:16 and Lv. 6:22-23) is also another name for the 'ôlâ, although apparently differing somewhat in the Carthage and Marseilles tariffs.

While there is truth in Rost's view that the incidence of the 'ôlâ is confined to Greece and the region 'bordered by the Taurus in the N, the Mediterranean in the W and the desert in the E and S' ('Erwägungen zum israelitischen Brandopfer', *Von Ugarit nach Qumran* (Eissfeldt Festschrift), 1958, pp. 177-183), it does not follow that its origins in Israel are in human sacrifice (2 Ki. 3:27) or rites of aversion of the Greek kind. Its undoubted gift character is apparent from the sublimation of the elements into a form in which they can be transported to God (Jdg. 6:21; 13:20; *cf.* Dt. 33:10), but this does not say anything about the purpose of the gift, which may have been of homage and thanksgiving, or to expiate sin. The latter note is present in Jb. 1:5; 42:8 and many early passages, and is given as the reason for the sacrifice in Lv. 1:4 (*cf.* the Ugaritic Text 9:7, where the burnt-offering (šrp) is connected to forgiveness of soul (slḥ npš)). When the sin-offering came to take precedence as the first of the series of sacrifices (Mishnah, *Zebahim* 10. 2) it tended to take over this function, but this was not originally the case (*cf.* Nu. 28-29, and *cf.* Nu. 6:14 with 6:11).

(ii) minhâ ('meal-offering', AV 'meat-offering', RSV 'cereal-offering'). It is somewhat confusing that this term is used in three different ways in the OT: 34 times it simply means 'present' or 'tribute' (*cf.* Jdg. 3:15; 1 Ki. 4:21—the root is probably mānaḥ, 'to give', *cf.* the peculiar form of the plural in the *MT* of Ps. 20:3), 97 times in the levitical literature it is the cereal-offering (*e.g.* in Lv. 2), and an indeterminate number of the remaining instances also have this meaning (*e.g.* Is. 43:23; 66:20), but in the others it refers to sacrifice generally (1 Sa. 2:29; 26:19, and probably in Malachi), and to animal sacrifice in particular (1 Sa. 2:12-17; Gn. 4:3-4; but see N. H. Snaith, *VT* 7, 1957, pp. 314-316). S. R. Driver rightly defines minhâ as not merely expressing the neutral idea of gift, but as denoting 'a present made to secure or retain good-will' (*HDB*, 3, 1900, p. 587; *cf.* Gn. 33:10), and this propitiatory sense is to the fore also in such sacrificial references as 1 Sa. 3:10-14; 26:19.

In these references the minhâ is an independent sacrifice, whereas in the laws it is the accompaniment of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings (Nu. 15:1-16), except in Nu. 5:15, 25; Lv. 5:11, 13; 6:19-23. According to Lv. 2, it is to consist of either flour (2:1-3), baked cakes (2:4-10) or raw grain (2:14-16), together with oil and frankincense (l^eḥônâ). With this 'minhâ of the forecourt' may be compared what J. H. Kurts called the 'minhâ of the holy place'—the altar of incense, the showbread on the table and the oil in the lamp (*The Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament*, 1865). Other ingredients might be salt (Lv. 2:13) and wine (Lv. 23:13). None of these offerings was eaten by the worshippers (but ?Lv. 7:11-18). They went to the priests, but only after a 'memorial portion' (Lv. 2:2) had been burnt on the altar. This RSV translation implies a derivation of 'azkârâ from zâkar, but G. R. Driver has suggested the meaning 'token', a part for the whole (*JSS* 1, 1956, pp. 97-105), and this would be yet another instance or the principle of substitution in the sacrifices.

(iii) zebaḥ and s^elâmîm. Again there is a variety of usage, in which zebaḥ and s^elâmîm are sometimes interchangeable (Lv. 7:11-21; 2 Ki. 16:13, 15), sometimes distinguished

(Jos. 22:27; *f.* Ex. 24:5; 1 Sa. 11:15), sometimes independent (2 Sa. 6:17-18; Ex. 32:6), and sometimes combined into a compound expression *zeḇaḥ šēlāmîm* or *ziḇḥê šēlāmîm* (so usually in the levitical law). It is doubtful if all these uses are to be understood as referring simply to the *zeḇaḥ* sacrificial meal. *sēlāmîm*, when used alone, was possibly not a meal at all (*cf.* however 2 Sa. 6:19), but a solemn expiatory offering akin to the 'ôlâ (so R. Rendtorff, *Studien zur Geschichte des Opfers*), and in conjunction with other sacrifices may still have retained this meaning. A šlm of a propitiatory kind seems to have been known at Ugarit (D. M. L. Urie, 'Sacrifice among the West Semites', *PEQ* 81, 1949, pp. 75-77) and is reflected in such passages as Jdg. 20:26; 1 Sa. 13:9; 2 Sa. 24:25. It is in no way inconsistent that a joyous meal followed, if the joy was the joy of forgiveness, for the *zeḇaḥ* covenant meal also usually marked it reconciliation after estrangement (Gn. 31:54; *cf.* S. I. Curtiss, 'The Semitic Sacrifice of Reconciliation', *The Expositor*, 6th series, 6, 1902, pp. 454-462).

Either of the proposed derivations of *šelem*—from *šālôm*, 'peace', so 'to make peace' (*cf.* G. Fohrer, 'to make complete' so 'concluding offering'; *TDNT* 7, pp. 1022-1023) or from *šillêm*, 'compensate', so 'to pay off, expiate' (*cf.* B. A. Levine, 'a tribute, a present, a gift of greeting', *In the Presence of the Lord*, 1974)—would be in keeping and preferable to the reduction of the peace-offering to what were in fact only segments 'vow-offering' or 'thank-offering'. These two, together with the freewill-offering, made up three classes within the peace-offering proper, and the regulations governing them (Lv. 7:1 ff.) are a supplement to those of Lv. 3. All three were thank-offerings, but the vow-offering, which discharged an earlier promise at the time of its accomplishment, was no longer optional, while the others were. Possibly it was for this reason that the vow reverted to the stricter regulation of a victim without blemish (Lv. 22:19; *cf.* Mal. 1:14, where it is added that it should be a male), while this requirement was relaxed for the freewill-offering (Lv. 22:23). Lv. 7 also adds the rules for the sacrificial meal, which had been missing in Lv. 3—*viz.* that the thank-offering was to be eaten the same day, and the vow and freewill-offering not later than the next. The priests' portions are defined (Lv. 7:32 ff.) as the 'wave' breast and the 'heave' shoulder (thigh). G. R. Driver (*op.cit.*) suggests some such meaning as 'contribution' for the terms 'wave' (*t'ûpâ*) and 'heave' (*t'ûmâ*), and this seems better than the older suggestion of horizontal and vertical motions at the altar, which are scarcely appropriate when rams, he-goats and Levites are the objects of the actions (Nu. 8:11). (See W. B. Stevenson, 'Hebrew 'Olah and Zebach Sacrifices', *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet*, 1950, pp. 488-497; *cf.* J. Milgrom, 'The Alleged Wave-Offering in Israel and in the Ancient Near East', *IEJ* 22, 1972, pp. 33-38.)

(iv) *'āšām* and *ḥaṭṭā'î*. The names of these offerings, guilt-offering (trespass-offering) and sin-offering, are the names of the offences for which they are to atone, *'āšām* ('guilt') and *ḥaṭṭā'î* ('sin'). In a cultic context these terms refer, not so much to moral offences, as to those which are ceremonially defiling, although the moral aspect is by no means ruled out. Of the former kind are the sin-offerings of the leper (Lv. 14; *cf.* Mk. 1:44) and the mother after childbirth (Lv. 12; *cf.* Lk. 2:24), and of the latter, those of deception and misappropriation in Lv. 6:1-7, and passion in Lv. 19:20-22. These examples can have been but little more than random specimens to illustrate the laws, and should not be

regarded as giving a full account of sacrifice for sin in these laws, much less in the cult as a whole. In the history, for example, these sacrifices scarcely figure at all. They are not mentioned in Deuteronomy (*cf.* Dt. 12), and are probably not to be understood in Ho. 4:8. But this is to be put down less to their post-exilic origin as Wellhausen argued—for they are well known to Ezekiel (*cf.* 40:39; 42:13) and may be hinted at in Ps. 40:6; 2 Ki. 12:16; 1 Sa. 6:3 (unless these are only monetary)—than to their individual nature (this might explain the silence concerning the 'āšām, which was not a festival sacrifice), and the fragmentary character of the records. They are equally silent for the post-exilic period ('āšām is mentioned, doubtfully, only in Ezr. 10:19 and ḥaṭṭā'ī in Ne. 10:33 and what appears a formula of the Chronicler in Ezr. 6:17; 8:35; 2 Ch. 29:21ff.).

Equally obscure is the relation between the two offerings (*e.g.* they are used synonymously in Lv. 5:6). All that can certainly be said is that sins against the neighbour are more prominent in the 'āšām and those against God in the ḥaṭṭā'ī. The 'āšām therefore requires a monetary compensation in addition to the sacrifice. The value of the misappropriation plus a fifth is to be repaid to the wronged neighbour (Lv. 6:5) or, if he or his representative is not available, to the priest (Nu. 5:8). The sacrificial victim in the guilt-offering, usually a ram, also became the priest's, and after the regular blood and fat ritual could be eaten by the priests as 'most holy' (Lv. 7:1-7). The same provision applies (Lv. 6:24-29) to the sin-offerings of the ruler (Lv. 4:22-26) and the common man (Lv. 4:27-31), but in these cases the blood is put on the horns of the altar.

The sin-offerings of the high priest (Lv. 4:1-12) and the whole community (Lv. 4:13-21) follow a still more solemn ritual, in which the blood is sprinkled (*hizzâ*, not *zāraq*) before the veil of the sanctuary, and the bodies of the victims are not eaten but burnt (*šārap*, not *hiqfîr*) outside the camp (Lv. 6:30; *cf.* Heb. 13:11). In addition to these four classes provisions are made for substitute offerings from the poor (Lv. 5:7-13). Chs. 4 and 5 thus contain a graduated scale of victims: bull (high priest and congregation, but *cf.* Nu. 15:24; Lv. 9:15; 16:5), he-goat (ruler), she-goat or lamb (common man), turtle-doves or pigeons (poor), flour (very poor). The following principles may be remarked: everyone must bring some sin-offering, no-one may eat of his own sin-offering, and the more propitiatory the rite the nearer the blood must come to God. On the Day of Atonement the veil itself was penetrated and the blood sprinkled on the ark. (See D. Schötz, *Schuld- und Sündopfer im Alten Testament*, 1930; L. Morris, "Asham", *EQ* 30, 1958, pp. 196-210; J. Milgrom, *VT* 21, 1971, pp. 237-239; D. Kellerman, *TDOT* 1, pp. 429-437.)

5. *The meaning.* The oft-stated purpose of the sacrifices in Lv. is 'to atone' (*kipper*, Lv. 1:4, *etc.*). This verb may be explained in one of three ways: 'to cover', from the Arab. *kafara*; 'to wipe away', from the Akkad. *kuppuru*; 'to ransom by a substitute', from the Heb. noun *kōper*. Although the second is favoured by most modern writers, it is the third which seems most in keeping with the theory of sacrifice given in Lv. 17:11, AV, 'the life of the flesh is in the blood . . . it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul' (but *cf.* RSV and J. Milgrom, *JBL* 90, 1971, pp. 149-156), and with the principle at work in many of the practices encountered above: the choice of offering material in 'biotic rapport'; their designation by the laying on of the hand; the burning of a token such as the fat or the 'azkârâ; the offering of a first portion and the redemption of the first-born (*cf.* S.

H. Hooke, 'The Theory and Practice of Substitution', *VT* 2, 1952, pp. 1-17, and for an opposite view A. Metzinger's articles, *Bib* 21, 1940). To these might be added the ritual of the heifer in Dt. 21 and the scapegoat in Lv. 16, which, although not blood sacrifices, reflect ideas which must *a fortiori* have been true of blood sacrifices. It was in this light that Lv. 16 was understood in the Jewish tradition (e.g. Mishnah, *Yoma* 6. 4, 'bear our sins and be gone').

Such passages are a warning against confining the atonement to a single act, as if it were the death alone, or the presentation of the blood, or the disposal of the victim, which atoned. The death was important—the live goat is only half of the ritual in Lv. 16 (cf. v. 15 with 14:4-7; 5:7-11). The blood manipulation was also important—in 2 Ch. 29:24 it seems to make atonement subsequent to the killing. The final disposal of the victim by fire or eating or to Azazel also had its place—in Lv. 10:16-20 the priestly eating of the sin-offering is more than just declaratory. The view that the death of the victim was only to release the life that was in the blood, and that the atonement consisted only of the latter, is as one-sided as that which sees the death as a quantitative penal satisfaction. To the latter view it has been objected that the sins for which sacrifice was offered were not those meriting death, that sin-offerings did not always require death (cf. Lv. 5:11-13), and that the killing could not have been central or it would have been in the hands of the priest, not the layman. These objections tell only against extreme forms of the substitution theory, not against the principle of substitution itself.

The real advantage of the substitution theory is that it retains the categories of personal relationships, where other views tend to descend to sub-personal dynamistic categories, in which the blood itself is thought of as effecting mystic union or revitalizing in a semi-magical way (cf. the theories of H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, 1964; A. Loisy, *RHLR* n.s. 1, 1910, pp. 1-30, and *Essai historique sur le sacrifice*, 1920; S. G. Gayford, *Sacrifice and Priesthood*, 1924; A. Bertholet, *JBL* 49, 1930, pp. 218-233, and *Der Sinn des kultischen Opfers*, 1942; E. O. James, *The Origins of Sacrifice*, 1933).

A weightier objection to the substitution theory is that which finds difficulty in the description of the sin-offering after the sacrifice as 'most holy', and as fit for priestly food. If a transfer of sin had taken place, would it not be unclean and fit only for destructive burning (šārap)? This was in fact the case with the primary rank sin-offerings. In the other cases the priestly eating is perhaps to be similarly interpreted, as if the power of superior 'holiness' in the priests through their anointing absorbed the uncleanness of the offering (cf. Lv. 10:16-20 and the article 'Sin-Eating', *ERE*, 11, 1920, pp. 572-576 (Hartland)). That we are dealing here with categories of 'holiness', which are not ours, is evident from the instruction to break the earthen vessels in which the sin-offering has been boiled (Lv. 6:28; cf. *Clean and Unclean). Alternatively, the death of the victim could be understood as neutralizing the infection of sin, so that the fat and blood could come unimpeded to the altar as an offering to God.

Whether other views of sacrifice such as 'homage' and 'communion' are possible alongside that outlined here, as favoured by most scholars (A. Wendel, *Das Opfer in der altisraelitischen Religion*, 1927; W. O. E. Oesterley, *Sacrifices in Ancient Israel*, 1937; H.

H. Rowley, *The Meaning of Sacrifice*, 1950), or whether certain types of sacrifice express one of these aspects more than another (e.g. burnt-offering, homage, and peace-offering, communion) is best left an open question. But in the laws at least the burnt-offering, the cereal-offering and even the peace-offering (but only rarely; cf. Ex. 29:33; Ezk. 45:15), as well as the sin- and guilt-offerings, are said to atone. And what is true of the laws seems to be true also of the history.

The question as to whether the offering was both an expiation (i.e. of sins) and a propitiation (i.e. of wrath) or only an expiation is also difficult to answer. kipper undoubtedly means propitiation in some instances (Nu. 16:41-50; Ex. 32:30), and this is supported by the use of the expression *rēḥ nīḥōḥ*, ‘sweet-smelling savour’, throughout the laws (cf. also Gn. 8:21, and LXX of Dt. 33:10). *rēḥ nīḥōḥ* may, however, have a weakened sense (G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 1925, pp. 77-81, points out that it is used where we should hardly expect it, with cereal and *zeḇaḥ* offerings, but not where we do expect it with sin- and guilt-offerings), and this is even more evidently the case with kipper when it is used in connection with such material things as the tabernacle furniture (Ex. 29:37; Ezk. 43:20; 45:19), and must be rendered simply ‘cleanse’.

Of importance to the discussion here is the recognition that God himself gave the ritual to sinful man (Lv. 17:11, ‘the blood. . . I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls’). The sacrifices are to be seen as operating within the sphere of the covenant and covenanting grace. They were not ‘man’s expedient for his own redemption’ as L. Köhler (*Old Testament Theology*, 1957) suggests, but were ‘the fruit of grace, not its root’ (A. C. Knudson, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*, 1918, p. 295). The question as to whether within this context propitiation has a place is similar to the NT one, and will depend on the view taken of sin, and law and the nature of God (*Atonement; also L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 1955).

It remains to be said that within the OT itself there is much to suggest that its system was not a final one. No sacrifices availed, for example, for breach of covenant (cf. Ex. 32:30ff.)—it is in this light that the prophetic rejection of sacrifice is to be understood—ør for sins of a ‘high hand’ that put man outside the covenant (Nu. 15:30), though perhaps idolatry and apostasy would be illustrations here. While not accepting the view, on the one hand, that the efficacy of sacrifice was limited to inadvertent sins, which were no real sins at all, or, on the other, that prophets and pious psalmists saw no value in sacrifice whatsoever, it remains true that the cult was liable to abuse, when the inward tie between worshipper and means of worship was loosed, and prophetic religion became necessary to emphasize the priority of a personal relation to God. It is no accident, however, that when priestly and prophetic religion meet in the figure of the Servant of the Lord in Is. 53 the highest point of OT religion is reached, as all that is valuable in cult is taken up into a person, who both makes a sacrificial atonement (*hizzâ*, ‘lamb’, ‘guilt-offering’) and calls for the love and personal allegiance of the human heart.

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F. D. Kidner, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 1952; R. K. Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism*, 1952; H. Ringgren, *Sacrifice in the Bible*, 1962, and *Israelite Religion*, 1965; R. de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice*, 1964, and *Ancient Israel*², 1965; G. Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, 1973; B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord*, 1974; F. M. Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ*, 1975.

II. In the New Testament

The Greek words used are *thysia*, *dōron*, *prosphora* and their cognates, and *anapherō*, translated ‘sacrifice, gift, offering, offer’ (*thysia* in Mk. 12:33 probably means ‘meal-offering’); *holokautōma*, ‘whole burnt offering’; *thymiamata*, ‘incense’; *spendō*, ‘pour out as a drink-offering’. All were adopted, with the other terms given below, from LXX.

a. Old Testament sacrifices in the New

The OT sacrifices (see ., above) were still being offered during practically the whole period of the composition of the NT, and it is not surprising, therefore, that even their literal significance comes in for some illuminating comment. Important maxims are to be found in Mt. 5:23-24; 12:3-5 and parallels, 17:24-27; 23:16-20; 1 Cor. 9:13-14. It is noteworthy that our Lord has sacrifice offered for him or offers it himself at his presentation in the Temple, at his last Passover, and presumably on those other occasions when he went up to Jerusalem for the feasts. The practice of the apostles in Acts removes all ground from the opinion that after the sacrifice of Christ the worship of the Jewish Temple is to be regarded as an abomination to God. We find them frequenting the Temple, and Paul himself goes up to Jerusalem for Pentecost, and on that occasion offers the sacrifices (which included sin-offerings) for the interruption of vows (Acts 21; cf. Nu. 6:10-12). However, in principle these sacrifices were now unnecessary, for the old covenant was now indeed ‘old’ and ‘ready to vanish away’ (Heb. 8:13), so that when the Romans destroyed the Temple even the non-Christian Jews ceased to offer the sacrifices.

The Epistle to the Hebrews contains the fullest treatment of the OT sacrifices. The teaching of this writer has its positive side (11:4), but his great concern is to point out their inadequacy except as types. The fact that they cannot gain for men entrance into the Holy of holies proves that they cannot free the conscience from guilt, but are simply carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation (9:6-10). Their inadequacy to atone is shown also by the fact that mere animals are offered (10:4), and by the very fact of their repetition (10:1-2). They are not so much remedies for sin as reminders of it (10:3).

b. ‘Spiritual sacrifices’

‘Spiritual sacrifices’ (1 Pet. 2:5; cf. Jn. 4:23-24; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 3:3) are the NT substitute for carnal ordinances, and appear frequently (Rom. 12:1; 15:16-17; Phil. 2:17; 4:18; 2 Tim. 4:6; Heb. 13:15-16; Rev. 5:8; 6:9; 8:3-4). Even in the OT, however, the psalmists and prophets sometimes use the language of sacrifice metaphorically (e.g. Pss. 50:13-14; 51:16-17; Is. 66:20), and the usage is continued in the intertestamental literature

(Ecclus. 35:1-3; *Testament of Levi* 3. 6; *Manual of Discipline* 8-9; Philo, *De Somniis* 2. 183). The attempt of F. C. N. Hicks (*The Fulness of Sacrifice*³, 1946) to refer such passages to literal sacrifices must be reckoned on the whole a failure. The sacrifices mentioned in these passages are not always immaterial, and sometimes involve death: the sense in which they are 'spiritual' is that they belong properly to the age of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 4:23-24; Rom. 15:16). But sometimes they are immaterial, and they never have a prescribed ritual. It appears, in fact, that every act of the Spirit-filled man can be reckoned as a spiritual sacrifice, and the sense in which it is a sacrifice is that it is devoted to God and is acceptable to God. It does not, of course, atone. The antitype of atoning sacrifice is to be sought not here but in the sacrifice of Christ, without which spiritual sacrifices would not be acceptable (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5).

c. The sacrifice of Christ

The sacrifice of Christ is one of the chief themes of the NT. His saving work is sometimes spoken of in ethical, sometimes in penal, but often also in sacrificial terms. He is spoken of as the slain lamb of God, whose precious blood takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29, 36; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:6-10; 13:8)—a lamb being an animal used in various sacrifices. More specifically, he is spoken of as the true Passover lamb (pascha, 1 Cor. 5:6-8), as a sin-offering *peri hamartias*, Rom. 8:3, *cf.* LXX Lv. 5:6-7, 11; 9:2-3; Ps. 40:6, *etc.*), and in Heb. 10:9-10 as the fulfilment of the covenant sacrifices of Ex. 24, the red heifer of Nu. 19, and the Day of Atonement offerings. The NT constantly identifies our Lord with the suffering Servant of Is. 52-53, who is a guilt-offering (Is. 53-10), and with the Messiah (Christ) of Dn. 9, who is to atone for iniquity (v. 24). The NT uses the terms 'propitiate' and 'ransom' (*Propitiation, *Redeemer) of Christ in a sacrificial sense, and the idea of being cleansed by his blood (1 Jn. 1:7; Heb. *passim*) is sacrificial (*Atonement, **III. b.**; *Sanctification).

The doctrine is most fully worked out in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer stresses the importance, in Christ's sacrifice, of his death (2:9, 14; 9:15-17, 22, 25-28; 13:12, 20), and the fact that his sacrifice is over (1:3; 7:27; 9:12, 25-28; 10:10, 12-14, 18), but his other statements have led some Anglo-Catholics (*e.g.* S. C. Gayford, *Sacrifice and Priesthood*, 1924) and the Presbyterian W. Milligan (*The Ascension and Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord*, 1892) to suppose, on the contrary, that the death is not the important element in Christ's sacrifice, and that his sacrifice goes on for ever. It is quite true that the Epistle confines Christ's priesthood and sanctuary to heaven (8:1-5; 9:11, 24), but it emphatically does not confine his sacrifice there. It states indeed that he offered there (8:3), but 'offer' is a word used equally of the donor who brings and kills a sacrifice outside the sanctuary and of the priest who presents it, either there on the altar or within. The reference here is doubtless to the sprinkling or 'offering' of blood in the Holy of holies on the Day of Atonement by the high priest (9:7, 21-26), a typical action fulfilled by Christ. All that was costly in the sacrifice—the part of the donor and the victim—took place at the cross: there remained only the priestly part—the presentation to God by an acceptable mediator—and this Christ performed by entering into his Father's presence at the ascension, since when his sprinkled blood has remained there (12:24). There is no call

to think of any *literal* presentation of himself or of his blood at the ascension: it is enough that he entered as the Priest of the sacrifice slain once for all at the cross, was immediately welcomed, and sat down in glory. His everlasting priestly intercession in heaven (7:24f.; cf. Ps. 99:6; Joel 2:17) is not some further activity, but is all part of his 'now appearing in the presence of God on our behalf' (9:24). On the basis of his finished work on the cross, and with his sufferings now all past, his simple appearance in God's presence on our behalf is both continual intercession for us and continual *expiation' or *propitiation' for our sins (2:10, 17f.; note present tense in the Gk.). See also *Priests and Levites.

It is a mistake to view Christ's sacrifice as being any more a literal sacrifice than the spiritual sacrifices are. Both transcend their OT types, and neither is ritual. The contention of Owen and others that Christ's sacrifice was a real sacrifice was directed against the Socinian view that Christ's death does not fulfil what the OT sacrifices set out to do, and failed to do—the view which denied that Christ's death makes propitiation. But apart from the slaying (and this is not performed, as in OT ritual, by the donor), everything in his sacrifice is spiritualized. For the body of an animal we have the body of God's Son (Heb. 10:5). For spotlessness, we have sinlessness (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). For a sweet smell, we have true acceptableness (Eph. 5:2). For the sprinkling of our bodies with blood, we have forgiveness (Heb. 9:13-14, 19-22). For symbolical atonement, we have real atonement (Heb. 10:1-10).

d. Sacrifice and the Lord's Supper

Sacrifice and the *Lord's Supper are indissolubly connected—not indeed in the way that Romanists, Non-jurors and Tractarians have wished to connect them, by making the eucharist an act of oblation, but as complementary to each other. To give 'do' and 'remembrance' (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25) a technical sacrificial sense is merely an afterthought of those who have already accepted the eucharistic sacrifice on non-scriptural grounds. The same is true of the attempt to exclude a future meaning from the participles 'given' and 'shed' (Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:19-20). And to correlate the eucharist with the eternal sacrifice of Christ in heaven is impossible if the eternal sacrifice is disproved. But to regard the eucharist as a *feast* upon Christ's sacrifice is demanded by the argument of 1 Cor. 10:14-22, in which it is made to correspond with Jewish and Gentile sacrificial meals; by the allusion to Ex. 24:8 in Mt. 26:28 and Mk. 14:24; and by the traditional interpretation of Heb. 13:10. Since the sacrifice of Christ is in so many points to be spiritualized, the language about the feast on his sacrifice is doubtless to be spiritualized also, but it is not to be bereft of its meaning. The meaning of the sacrificial meal was not so much the appropriation of atonement as the fellowship with God which it effected, and this was betokened by a feast with God upon the victim. Whether in enjoying this fellowship with God we also truly partake of Christ or of his body and blood is the central point of controversy about the sacrament. But since Jn. 6 teaches that those who believe on Christ when they see him or hear his words do feed on him, on his body and blood, through the Spirit, there does not seem to be any reason for doubting that what happens through his words also happens through the tokens of bread and wine which he instituted, though in an equally spiritual manner.

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PART 2: A REVELATION OF.....

THE 7 REVELATIONS OF ' THE LAMB'

INTRODUCTION

In our carnal, human understanding, God would seem more likely to be compared with a lion than a lamb. For a lion symbolises strength, power victory and conquest, as king of his domain. Very few of us would be prepared to confront a lion.

Yet in the Bible, it is only in the book of Hosea that the imagery of a lion is applied to God. And then, only briefly. Elsewhere a lion is simply a lion, or an image of powerful earthly, or dark spiritual, leaders.

The Jews looked forward to the coming of a ' Savior' who would rescue them from the conquering Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans. A warrior king, one like a lion. Instead, Jesus came as a lamb! No wonder they didn' t recognise Him!

This enigma is beautifully dealt with in the book of Revelation. Victory over evil has been won! The lion of the tribe of Judah is about to open the scroll!

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (Revelation 5:1-5)

Everyone is looking for the all-conquering lion. But what do they find? Not a lion, but a lamb!

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.' (Revelation 5:6-10)

Isn't that amazing! Not just a lamb, but one who had been killed by the lions of the age, the Romans. Wow! Yet this sacrificial lamb won the victory over the forces of evil and will reign on the earth, with His overcomers, during the final kingdom age.

In seven (the number of completion) places throughout the Bible, we see through the imagery of the 'lamb', the character and role of Jesus revealed.

It is these seven illustrations we are going to consider in this study.

LAMB OF FORGIVENESS

In The Garden of Eden

THE STORY

The first mention of the lamb in the Bible is not by name, but by implication. Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, having been created by God to look after it. All went well for a period. Then they were tempted by, and finally succumbed to, the allure of the luscious looking, forbidden fruit.

We all now experience the consequences of their unfortunate actions. Let's not be self-righteous though. We would likely have done the same! So now our inherited problems include:

16 To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' 17 To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'(Genesis 3:16-19)

(Note: All quotations are from The New International Version, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984 unless otherwise specified.)

Adam and Eve had realised they were naked attempting to hide from God during the above conversation. An impossible task! For us too!

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' 10 He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'(Genesis 3:8-10)

However, even after God' s huge disappointment with their choice to go their own way, He forgave them. Incredible!

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

To get the skins to make the garments, God had to kill an animal. Here, near the beginning of time, we saw the basic biblical principle of a ' life for a life' in order to receive God' s forgiveness, established. This principle is established in the Law:

11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one' s life. (Leviticus 17:11)

The Law was confirmed in the New Testament:

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:22)

The sacrifice of animals in the Garden of Eden was the first picture of what was to come, a type of Jesus being sacrificed on the cross. He was the final blood sacrifice.

24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God' s presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a

second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:24-8)

FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE CROSS

The killing of animals to make garments of forgiveness, for Adam and Eve, reflected the death of Jesus on the cross, thousands of years later.

So what does the blood, symbolising life, do?

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:7-10)

It brings forgiveness, God's forgiveness. The forgiveness Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden. Even though they had chosen to separate themselves from God, He forgave them, by sacrificing animal lives for them.

But they still experienced the consequences of their sin. Even though forgiven, they were still banished from the Garden.

22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. (Genesis 3:22-23)

Jesus is likened to Adam, in that His actions affected the future of mankind. Adam condemned us all by one act of sin, while Jesus died to rescue all through a single act of sacrifice.

18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19)

This is succinctly summarised in Corinthians.

21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

OUR RESPONSE

The fact that Jesus sacrificed His life for our forgiveness is a foundational understanding of all Christians. It is wonderful! Thank you Jesus! Hallelujah!

But wait!

What is not so well understood or accepted is the required response to God' s gracious gift of forgiveness! It comes as a simple, two-sentence adjunct to the Lord' s Prayer. (Disciples Prayer really!) Reciprocal forgiveness!

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Like us, the Disciples too, had a problem grasping hold of this concept of reciprocal forgiveness. Peter, who never minded expressing his opinion, asked the question:

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?'" (Matthew 18:21)

He got an answer he didn't really want!

*22 Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.
(Matthew 18:22)*

To the Jews, the number 'seven' represents completion. So Peter understandably, thought seven times would be the necessary requirement. But Jesus corrected him. Forgiveness is to be ongoing, 'completely-completely'.

To emphasise this point, Jesus told the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

23 'Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 'The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 'But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29 'His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 'But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 'Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.'(Matthew 18:23-35)

We are like the first servant, while God is the servant's master. Through the ultimate sacrifice of His Son Jesus, He has forgiven us, He has cancelled

our debt of sin. How can anything anyone else has done, compare with what He did for us?

Paul gave a practical example of this in his dealings with the church at Corinth. A member had been living with his stepmother.

*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife.
(1 Corinthians 5:1-2)*

As this behaviour was morally unacceptable to God, the situation needed to be dealt with promptly.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked man from among you.' (1 Corinthians 5:12-13)

The man concerned corrected the situation and was genuinely repentant. Several months later, Paul wrote a second letter to the church and recommended that the individual be forgiven and restored into fellowship.

*If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. 9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.
(2 Corinthians 2:5-11)*

The capacity to forgive is necessary in order to build a godly character.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:12-14)

We are to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:5-10)

CONCLUSION

God forgave Adam and Eve for their sin by providing them with ' a covering' in the form of garments of skin to wear. In so doing, He established the principle of sacrifice, of a ' life for a life' . As we continue, we shall see it is likely that the animals involved were lambs. For the lamb was found both at the heart of the physical sacrificial system and as the symbol used to represent, the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus.

As God has forgiven us, so too, we are to forgive those who offend us.

Forgiveness is a foundation of the character of Jesus. Illustrated in the biggest way possible when He forgave those responsible for His crucifixion. May this be our response too.

33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' (Luke 23:33-34)

LAMB OF OBEDIENCE

Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac

THE STORY

Abraham and his family were nomads, wandering from place to place as food supplies for their stock ran out in the adjacent area. Abraham bestrode his times, as did Moses and Jesus in their kingdom ages. He believed in and was faithful to the one true God, at a time when generally, many gods were worshipped.

God chose Abraham to be the natural father of what was to become his chosen people, the Jews - and the spiritual father of all Christians today. For a wandering nomad to believe this promise took some imagination and faith! Particularly as he and his wife Sarah, had been unable to have children. But believe he did!

*6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.
(Genesis 15:6)*

Reality is, the greater the promises we are given by God, the greater the testing of our faith will be. It doesn't pay to desire more in God than you are prepared to accept in associated trials and testings!

Abraham was put to two particular tests. The first one he failed, proving his humanity. For he was forced to wait many years after receiving the promise of an heir, continually trying and failing, until finally Sarah reached menopause and the promise was no longer humanly possible. So together, they decided to help God out! Not a good idea! Another one we experience the consequences of today. Abraham was given his wife's maid Hagar to sleep with, in order to produce the promised successor, in the normal custom of the times. Hagar produced Ishmael, starting the line of Abraham through which the Moslem religion traces its spiritual ancestry.

However, in due time, God intervened. Sarah became pregnant by Abraham supernaturally, for she was past menopause. Isaac was born. Sarah at 90 was delighted!

5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." 7 And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." (Genesis 21:5-7)

Fortunately for Sarah at 90, she would have had servants to look after the baby. God had proved himself faithful. Proven faith builds greater faith. This was going to be necessary for the next test! Everything was going well. Isaac was growing up strong and healthy. The succession to the promise of the nation was assured - at least for another generation. That is all we too, can ensure today.

One day however, the biggest test of Abraham' s faith came.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Genesis 22:1-2)

Can you imagine Abraham' s thoughts, doubts and questions! "Surely this can' t be right God!" But, after his experience with Isaac' s birth, he knew that he could trust God. And so he obeyed him.

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." (Genesis 22:3-5)

When they reached the place God told Abraham to go, Isaac and he set off up Mount Moriah. Where incidentally, 1100 years later, David built an Altar on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. It was also the site of Solomon' s Temple and today is the site of the Moslem Temple, the Dome of the Rock. A place steeped in history.

However, Isaac was simply troubled by the lack of a lamb to sacrifice.

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. (Genesis 22:6-8)

Once they reached the top of the mountain, Abraham would have informed Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice, and something Isaac possibly already suspected. Isaac would have had to co-operate, for he was in his teens and Abraham was nearing 120! Why did he? Because he believed his father when he had told him over the years of his youth that his progeny were to be the next generation of the ' Chosen Race' . Perhaps he and his father thought that God would provide a substitute, or more likely, Isaac would be resurrected in order to fulfil his role. Providing an emerging picture of Jesus. Both Abraham and Isaac were obedient to the Lord.

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. (Genesis 22:9-10)

The test was passed.

11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy,"

*he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’
(Genesis 22:11-12)*

A substitute ram (male sheep) was provided. Now a clear picture of Jesus who was to become our substitute sacrifice.

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.’(Genesis 22:13-14)

Abraham had proved his faith, so the covenant of the nation was confirmed through his obedience.

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, ‘I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.’(Genesis 22:13-14)

This action of Abraham is confirmed in the book of Hebrews, where the comparison to the resurrection of Jesus is clear.

*17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.
(Hebrews 11:17-19)*

In Abraham' s sacrifice of Isaac we have the second biblical picture of the death of Jesus on the cross.

OBEDIENCE ON THE CROSS

Jesus was the ultimate example of obedience. He knew the agony that the cross would be. He didn' t want to do it! Yet He remained as obedient to the Father then, as he had been all His life.

39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. 40 On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’ 41 He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 ‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’ 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:39-44)

Right unto His death, after which He was glorified to the highest place in Heaven.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5)

The writer of Hebrews succinctly summed up the results of his obedience, and their reward.

7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from

death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10)

OUR RESPONSE

As Jesus was obedient to the Father, so we are to follow his example. Jesus Himself was quite definite about this!

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.' 28 He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' (Luke 11:27-28)

We are to obey Him, and through following Him, we will obey the Father.

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. (John 15:10)

Obedience in following His teaching is a necessary requirement and proof of our love for Him and the Father. Believers insufficiently understand this. Obedience in following His commands is the primary sign of our belief in and love for Jesus. If we don't obey Him, we don't truly love Him!

23 Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. (John 14:23-24)

Paul talks about his call to apostleship (note that there is no capital ' a ' . It' s a job description, not a title), one to which he was obedient and suffered greatly for. This call was to bring the gentiles into obedience.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his

prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. 5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. 6 And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-6)

Paul makes the point even more strongly when he set out basic Christian theology in Romans. We have the choice of sin and death, or obedience and righteousness. There is no middle way!

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:15-16)

However, when we inadvertently go wrong, there is a way out. Not sinning but obeying the commands of the father, is the ideal.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. (1 John 2:1-3)

John confirms that the basis of obedience is adherence to the 'Golden Rule' Jesus proclaimed, of loving both God and people.

23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. (1 John 3:23-4)

And a primary way of doing so is through the ' Great Commission' . This has two parts. Firstly sharing the ' good news' with non-believers. We often neglect the second part of the instruction though. Turning believers into disciples through obedience to the commands of Jesus.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20)

CONCLUSION

Obedience to God was at the centre of the life of Abraham and the overriding characteristic that separates him from others. If asked to mention one event from Abraham' s life, 99% of us will mention Isaac' s sacrifice, the ultimate test of a man' s obedience.

The cross too, is the key event in the life of Jesus. Once again, His sacrifice was a test of obedience. May we too, follow in His footsteps, being unconditionally obedient to God' s Word for us.

42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."(Luke 22:42)

LAMB OF SALVATION

Moses and the Passover Lamb

THE STORY

The Israelites had lived in Egypt for over 400 years. The family of 70 came as guests of the Pharaoh. Their prosperity caused the Egyptians to persecute them. So their God set them, by now, 2 million free, ready to claim their place as an independent nation.

Jacob's family came into Egypt as a group of wandering nomads. Arriving there they settled in one place, received a written language, learned how to live together as a society and acquired agricultural skills from their captors. The people were ready to build a nation. Problem was, the Egyptians didn't want to let them go and do it! For the Egyptians were doing well from the Jews industriousness and they didn't want to see a potential competitor to their own regional supremacy become established.

God used this 400 years to increase, nurture and train His chosen people, the time had now come for them to claim and possess the promised godly inheritance. And His instrument of choice to accomplish the first stage of this plan, was His servant Moses.

⁶ he said, 'Listen to my words: 'When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. ⁷ But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. (Numbers 12:6)

Moses was chosen from the beginning of his life for this task. He was saved when Jewish boys were being killed. Was brought up in the Pharaoh's palace and taught the art of governmental leadership. Was called of God. But like Abraham, he couldn't wait and tried to help God out! So after trying to generate an uprising, Moses banished himself to Midian where, over 40 years, he lost his pride and vision, becoming the humblest of all men.

³ *(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.) (Numbers 12:3)*

Moses was now prepared for the task at hand. At age 80! God took him and his mouthpiece, his brother Aaron, to the Pharaoh to call for the release of the Israelites from the district of Rameses where they lived. Moses was well known at the palace, likely having been the Pharaoh's stepbrother, no doubt being regarded as the 'black sheep' of the family.

We all know of God's chosen method of persuasion, the 10 plagues. Nine came and went, while the Pharaoh vacillated. So it was now time for the knockout punch, the one that would convince him that it was surely in the Egyptians best interests to let the Jews leave.

⁴ *So Moses said, 'This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. ⁵ Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶ There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. ⁷ But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.'* Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. (Exodus 11:4-8)

But Pharaoh again refused to obey God. So Moses was told how to protect the Israelites from the angel of death. Instructed to sacrifice a lamb (or goat) as a substitute for the life of the eldest son in each family, a life for a life.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² 'This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without

defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. (Exodus 12:1-7)

And it worked! Well, at least for long enough for the people to leave.

*³¹ During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. ³² Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.’ ³³ The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. ‘For otherwise,’ they said, ‘we will all die!’”
(Exodus 12:31-3)*

Of course, after they left, the Pharaoh again changed his mind and chased them. But that is another story, another miracle.

But, in the Passover, we have the third picture of the death of Jesus on the cross.

SALVATION THROUGH THE CROSS

The protection afforded by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorframe of the house speaks of our entry into the ' house' of heaven through the ' door' of the blood of Jesus, shed for us on the cross.

God sent His son Jesus, to be the means of bringing us back into relationship with Him. Jesus in dying on the cross, ' saved' us from death through His blood, His life for our life.

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you

have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:4-10)

Through obedience, He was made High Priest before God, for all those who will obey Him.

⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:8-10)

If we personally accept His provision, we experience ' salvation' . It sounds incredible but it is the truth.

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

' The Lamb' , Jesus, is now the source of salvation for all who will believe.

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ (Revelation 7:9-10)

OUR RESPONSE

God provided but one way to be reunited with Him.

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”(Acts 4:12)

It is guaranteed for all those who will believe.

*²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’
(Acts 2:21)*

This salvation applies to all those who will accept it through faith.

*¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”(Romans 1:16-17)*

Now!

*As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. ²
For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)*

Contrary to what many believe, salvation is not an event but a process. We have been saved, we are being saved and we will be saved. We are to grow in our salvation.

² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:2-3)

We need to keep working at our salvation, our relationship with Jesus, through good times and bad, with fear and trembling.

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13)

The 'once saved, always saved', live life as you will, philosophy of 'easy Christianity' is false doctrine. If we don't live it, we surely don't truly believe it!

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ² For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴ God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.
(Hebrews 2:1-4)

For we will all face judgement in due time.

²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:27-8)

And finally, by salvation through the 'blood of the Lamb', we have taken the first step in overcoming the power of satan to rule in our life.

'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ¹¹ They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.
(Revelation 12:10-11)

Yes, Jesus is the Lamb of salvation, the only one through whom we can restore a relationship with God. Thank you Jesus, for being my Passover Lamb, for dying on the cross as a substitute for me.

LAMB OF SACRIFICE

Daily Offerings at the Tabernacle

THE STORY

After the Israelites left Egypt they renewed their covenant with the Lord.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." (Exodus 24:4b-7)

Moses was then instructed by God to go up Mt. Sinai, where he would receive the Law.

¹² The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction." ¹³ Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. ¹⁴ He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them." ¹⁵ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. ¹⁷ To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. ¹⁸ Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:12-18)

The first recorded instruction from this time (reflecting its importance) was to build the world's first church, the Tabernacle of Moses. A structure

designed not only to be the focus of worship for the people of the time, but also to provide the pattern of the church still applicable today.

The LORD said to Moses, ² ‘Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. ³ These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ⁵ ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; ⁶ olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁷ and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. ⁸ ‘Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. (Exodus 25:1-9)

The Tabernacle was divided into three parts, each with a different role, or function, in the worship of God.

a. OUTER COURT: ‘*Realm of Sacrifice*’(Picture of Jesus)

In spite of the sanitised pictures we might be given, the Outer Court was a gruesome place, filled with the fear and stench of death. If you have ever been in an abattoir (slaughterhouse) you will understand how a fear of death permeates the place, which is picked up by the animals as they come in to be killed. The stench from pierced stomachs and bowels removed from the slaughtered animals adds to the gruesome horror of death by sacrifice. A vivid understanding of the cost of sin, of a life for a life, was readily understood by all those who entered.

b. HOLY PLACE: ‘*Realm of Worship*’(Holy Spirit)

In contrast to the horror of the Outer Court was the beauty of the inside of the Tent and the golden furniture it contained. Only the Priests were allowed to enter the room. To attend to the stipulated requirements God laid down concerning how he was to be worshipped through the three items of furniture the room contained.

c. HOLY OF HOLIES: ‘*Realm of God’s Presence*’(God the Father)

The very presence of God dwelled above the ' Atonement Cover' , between the wings of the two cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. Entry into this holiest place of all was restricted to the High Priest, only on one day a year, at which time he sprinkled blood from the sacrifices before God to cover the sins of all the people of Israel.

In this study, we are specifically interested in the practices of the Outer Court, for this represented Jesus. While there were several types of offering for specific purposes, the principal one, made twice daily, morning and evening, was the sacrifice of year-old lamb.

³⁸ *This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old.* ³⁹ *Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight.* ⁴⁰ *With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering.* ⁴¹ *Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. (Exodus 29:38-41)*

It was a twice-daily offering to the Lord. Yet, interestingly, the one offering that was often retained, even in days of apostasy, such as those during the time of the evil King Ahaz.

¹⁵ *King Ahaz then gave these orders to Uriah the priest: ‘On the large new altar, offer the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt offering and his grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering. Sprinkle on the altar all the blood of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. But I will use the bronze altar for seeking guidance.’* ¹⁶ *And Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had ordered. (2 Kings 16:15-16)*

This offering was regarded as extremely important within the religious system of firstly, Israel, and then the southern kingdom of Judah.

On the Sabbath, (Saturday) the offering was doubled.

⁹ *“On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil. ¹⁰ This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.*
(Numbers 28:9-10)

Burnt, Guilt, Grain, Fellowship, and Sin Offerings supplemented these daily offerings, where appropriate. And of course, at the Religious Feasts of Passover, Weeks (Pentecost) and Tabernacles, additional sacrificial offerings were made. But the principal, twice daily offering of an unblemished lamb remained constant throughout the year.

Therefore, through the daily sacrificial system, we have another picture of the death of Jesus on the cross.

SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS

The righteous, perfect lamb Jesus, died for all those who will believe in order that we may be restored into relationship with the Father.

²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-6)

Unlike the daily Tabernacle and Temple sacrifices required for the forgiveness of ongoing sin, Jesus died just the once as a sacrifice for all sin.

²⁶ *Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:26)*

For He understood that God was not happy with animal offerings.

⁵ *Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;’* ⁶ *with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.* ⁷ *Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.’”* (Hebrews 10:5-7)

As the final sacrifice for our sin, He defends us before the Father.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)*

OUR RESPONSE

Through this New Covenant (Testament) of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, He made us ' positionally' perfect, positionally holy.

⁸ *First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’* (although the law required them to be made). ⁹ *Then he said, ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will.’* *He sets aside the first to establish the second.* ¹⁰ *And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* ¹¹ *Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.* ¹² *But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.* ¹³ *Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,* ¹⁴ *because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*
(Hebrews 10:8-14)

Our sin is forgiven and our lawless acts, forgotten.

*¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: ¹⁶ ‘This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.’ ¹⁷ Then he adds: ‘Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.’ ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.
(Hebrews 10:15-18)*

The problem we have in much of the church is, we use the final sacrifice of Jesus as an excuse to go on sinning. Once forgiven, always forgiven. So it doesn' t matter how we live!

This is so far from the truth as to be ' criminal' . We are told to imitate Jesus. As He was a sacrifice for us, so we need to sacrifice our fleshly desires for Him. For holiness needs to be worked out in our lives ' experientially' .

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ (Ephesians 5:1-14)

We are to be different to those in the ' world' .

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶ as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (Philippians 2:14-18)

Righteous living is to be our response to the sacrifice Jesus made for us. As followers of Jesus we are to meet together, love each other and do good deeds.

If we don' t, the consequences are dire. We will be judged and consigned to the raging fire along with all the others who have chosen to go their own way. This is not David Tait being condemnatory, but the Word of God!

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. ²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. (Hebrews 10:19-27)

We are to make the sacrifice of faith.

¹⁷ *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.
(Hebrews 11:17)*

Accompanied by the sacrifices of worship, goodness and sharing.

¹⁵ *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of
praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do
good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
(Hebrews 13:15-16)*

As the Father loved us enough to send Jesus, as Jesus loved us enough to die for us, so we are to love others with sacrificial love.

⁸ *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is
how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the
world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved
God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our
sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one
another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God
lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:8-12)*

Yes, our response to the sacrifice of Jesus is to return the complement of love shown to us, back to God and to others, to apply the 'Golden Rule' in our lives.

³⁷ *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest
commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as
yourself.' (Matthew 22:27-8)*

LAMB OF GOD

Jesus

THE STORY

God gave John the Baptist, the 'cousin' of Jesus, the role of announcing Him to the world.

⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (John 1:6-9)

They first 'met' while inside the respective wombs of their mothers!

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:39-41)

Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in Jerusalem, so it is almost certain that John and Jesus would have known each other well. Joseph, often with Mary and their family, would have made regular trips from Nazareth to Jerusalem to attend the annual religious festivals of Passover, Weeks (Pentecost) and Tabernacles.

John had a powerful ministry in his own right, so much so that even the priests and the Levites wondered if he might be 'the Christ'. He denied it, informing them he was preparing the way for the Lord and they needed to get their lives in order now!

¹⁹ Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." ²¹ They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He

answered, 'No.'" ²² Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'" ²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (John 1:19-23)

The Jews believed that Elijah would return before the Messiah came.

⁵ 'See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.'" (Malachi 4:5-6)

So in order to give their masters a better answer the priests investigated John' s possible ' Elijah role' . John didn' t give them a direct answer, but did indirectly, through focusing attention on Jesus.

²² Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'" ²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" ²⁴ Now some Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, 'Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'" ²⁶ 'I baptize with water,' John replied, 'but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'" ²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. (John 1:22-28)

Jesus confirmed John' s Elijah role later in His ministry.

¹¹ And they asked him, 'Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?'" ¹² Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.'" (Mark 9:11-13)

So now we have the situation set up for the two to meet on a new basis, not as cousins, but as the prophet John heralding the launching of the ministry of the Lord. At which time John announced Jesus as being the 'Lamb of God' .

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.'"
(John 1:29-31)

In Jewish culture and thought, testimony and experience are of greatest importance, rather than the facts and logic of our Greek based, Western cultures. So John confirmed His statements with the greatest testimony of all, his confirmation from God of his revelation of Jesus. In Jewish culture this testimony was the strongest endorsement John could possibly give of the Sonship of Jesus.

³² Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.'"
(John 1:32-34)

Being announced as the 'Lamb of God' , would also have been of significance, in light of the daily sacrifices of the lamb on the Altar of the Temple. This was well understood by the writer of Hebrews.

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:11-14)

Yes, Jesus indeed, is the Lamb of God.

Through John, we have the announcement of the Lamb of God, Jesus, who would in 3 1/2 short years die for you and for me on the cross.

LAMB OF GOD ON THE CROSS

It was prophesied through Isaiah, 700 years before the event occurred, that the Lamb would suffer and be slaughtered for us. How Jesus would die a horrible, yet victorious death for you and me.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:1-10)

Philip confirmed this truth when the eunuch enquired of whom the scripture had been written.

³² *The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” ³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.*
(Acts 8:32-5)

Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, likened His death on the cross to that of the Passover Lamb, which we looked at earlier.

⁷ *Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6)*

Peter stated that the Christ was indeed a Lamb without blemish or defect who lived, died and rose again, to be glorified by God.

¹⁷ *Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:17-21)*

Finally John, the disciple Jesus loved, in the vision he received on the Island of Patmos, saw the Lamb that was slain, walking in victory!

⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’ ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’
(Revelation 5:5-10)

The Lamb standing before the throne, being worshipped by believers from all over the earth! Hallelujah!

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ (Revelation 7:9-10)

OUR RESPONSE

So what is our response to the death of the Lamb of God on the cross, that day on Calvary's forlorn hill to be? Christ died for us.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

He died to make peace with God on our behalf.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
(Romans 5:9-11)

As Jesus died for us, we are to respond by living sinless lives.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. (Romans 6:8-14)

It's not easy! We can only do it because Jesus is interceding for before the Father.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we

are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-8)

We are to set our eyes on things above, putting to death our earthly nature, developing a virtuous character, learning to forgive others and walk in love.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.⁸ But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:1-14)

And confirmed in Corinthians.

¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live

should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (1 Corinthians 5:14-15)

If we continue to live this way throughout our lives we are promised we will reign with Jesus.

¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

That is our both our hope and the promise of God.

¹³ Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

LAMB OF VICTORY

Over Satan

THE STORY

The story of the battle against, and victory over satan, is foreshadowed in the Garden of Eden where satan tempted Adam and Eve through the serpent. God told satan his final fate would be at the hands of Jesus, the ' he' referred to.

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, 'Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'" (Genesis 3:13-15)

The first recorded skirmish in the ministry of Jesus between the protagonists of good and evil is found at the beginning. Jesus had been fasting for forty days, likely communicating with His Father about things to come, while preparing Himself in the spiritual for the coming confrontation with His adversary.

In the physical, He was most vulnerable to temptation because of His self-deprivation of food.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (Matthew 4:1-2)

Satan attacked Jesus in the same way as he attacks men, in a modified form of men' s fatal attractions, ' girls, gold and glory' . The ' girls' was substituted with another, more appropriate lust of the flesh for Jesus, ' food' . Particularly at the end of a long fast! Women have a different set of temptations. Possibly ' gossip, glamour and genetics' ? Better ask a woman though!

So we have the first temptation, one of the flesh.

³ *The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’(Matthew 4:3)*

One counter-balanced with the perfect spiritual response.

⁴ *Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4)*

Next satan tried ' glory' , showing His power by being lifted up by the angels.

⁵ *Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ ‘If you are the Son of God,” he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” (Matthew 4:5-6)*

Jesus gave an amazing answer, for what satan had said was true. He would have been saved from destruction. But satan' s suggestion would have effectively given Jesus the glory rather than His Father.

⁷ *Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Matthew 4:7)*

When this failed, satan tried the final trial of ' gold' , the earthly riches that still entrap most of us today.

⁸ *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”(Matthew 4:8-9)*

Jesus came up with the answer that still applies for you and me today.

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, *“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”* (Matthew 4:10)

Satan failed, as he will do with us when our responses are the same as those of Jesus.

¹¹ *Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*
(Matthew 4:11)

VICTORY THROUGH THE CROSS

The head to head battle continued with the cross. Satan, as he had done with Adam and Eve, worked through a surrogate, this time, the disciples treasurer, Judas. Judas was tempted with ' gold' , a weakness he had exhibited throughout his time as a disciple.

³ *Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.* ⁴ *And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.* ⁵ *They were delighted and agreed to give him money.* ⁶ *He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.* (Luke 22:3-6)

Satan no doubt thought he was on a winner this time, when Jesus was tortured and hung to die on the cross! Even His Father had deserted Him!

⁴⁵ *From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.*
⁴⁶ *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”— which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’* (Matthew 27:45-6)

Then our Savior died!

⁵⁰ *And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.* (Matthew 27:50)

He had lost the war. Satan had won! Or had he? For now, strange things started to happen! Satan would have started to realise he was in trouble! The Holy of Holies was opened up to all. Death was being overcome!

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵² The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27:51-3)

Even the Roman soldiers could see that Satan was in real trouble!

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:54)

We don't know the full details of what happened next. But Jesus said He would spend 3 days and 3 nights in the literal fire of the heart of the earth, symbolic of fighting the battle of life and death with Satan.

⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40)

As confirmed by Paul in Ephesians.

⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? (Or ' the depths of the earth' (Ephesians 4:9)

Which resulted in the victory of Jesus over Satan!

¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) (Ephesians 4:10)

Yes Jesus conquered death, defeated satan and rose again. It is both interesting and significant that He appeared only to believers. For it is only believers who will experience the reality of eternal life.

³⁹ *“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.*
(Acts 10:39-41)

Jesus had predicted these events several times before He died.

²¹ *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Matthew 16:21)*

And reminded His followers of them after His resurrection.

⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:45-8)*

OUR RESPONSE

Satan has been defeated, and death overcome by Jesus, ' positionally' on our behalf. However, we still need to work out this process ' experientially' in our lives. This ongoing necessity for ' discipleship' is ignored by too many today. As we overcome the sin in our life through the victory of Jesus, so we too will cloak ourselves with immortality.

⁵³ *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the*

*imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 15:53-7)*

The question then arises as to how do we overcome satan in this 'experiential' way in our life. The Bible tells us how. Precisely! In its final book, that of Revelation. The 'accuser of our brothers', the 'him' referred to, is satan. The method of overcoming 'him' follows.

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."¹¹ They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:10-11)

Interestingly, in terms of our study, in Revelation 12:11 the victory, the overcoming of satan, is firstly accomplished through the blood of the 'Lamb'. Let's have a look at the verse in detail, for it is the foundation upon which 'Walking With Jesus Ministries' is based.

They overcame him (ie satan).....

in three ways, each building upon the other.

a. *by the blood of the Lamb (Salvation through Jesus)*

The very first step of our Christian walk is the acceptance of Jesus as our Savior. The blood, the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross is the first step in the process of setting us free from satan's bondage of sin.

".....To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood". (Revelation 1:5)

As we saw right back in the first section about Adam and Eve, God requires ' a life for a life' in order that we might be restored into relationship with Him.

‘For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement (oneness with God) for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.’(Leviticus 17:11)

This process is much better explained than I can, in chapters 5 of the book of Romans. Here are two excerpts to confirm this to you.

(5:12) “therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned”. (5:19) ‘For just as through the disobedience of one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.’(Romans 5:12,19)

The first step we must take then when seeking victory over satan is to believe in Jesus and accept what He did for us in dying on the cross. While this is all that is required to become a ' Christian' , it is but the start of our walk with Jesus, not its fulfilment. For us to gain victory over satan in our lives now, we need to apply the remaining two stages set out in Revelation 12:11. Let' s look at the next step.

b. *and by the word of their testimony (Through the Holy Spirit)*

How then does the word of their testimony relate to the Holy Spirit?"

Well, that was my question of the Lord too, when he first stopped me at this verse. As usual, He had an answer. He took me to Matthew 12:34.

*‘You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good?
For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.’”*

The book of James similarly tells us that *‘no man can tame the tongue (James 3:7)’*”.

Yes, in the end, no matter how we try to cover things up, the words we speak reflect our heart attitude. And our heart, the symbolic seat of our emotions or feelings, is the realm of the Holy Spirit. That is why, when we are baptised in or released into the power of the Holy Spirit, our ability to express our emotions in our worship, in the adoration of our God, increases amazingly.

“so that with one heart and mouth (by the Holy Spirit) you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”(Romans 15:6)

In order to have the victory over satan now, we must, as well as the blood of Jesus, release and utilise the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Spirit must be overcome with Spirit.

‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’(Ephesians 6:12)

We are given spiritual gifts to help us.

*‘Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.’
(1 Corinthians 12:7-10)*

And through developing spiritual fruit, we are to take on the character of Jesus.

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* ²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have*

crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)*

The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to understand the Word, and also the revelation of the Word, the words between the lines.

‘But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. (v15) All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.’ (John 16:13,15)

Through which we build up faith and strength to win the battle.

‘There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. (The Holy Spirit) There are different kinds of service but the same Lord. (Jesus) There are different kinds of working but the same God (The Father) works all of them in all men.’ (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

But that is not all! For there remains one further step in preparing us to win the victory over satan.

**c. *they loved not their lives so much as to shrink from death.*
(Obedience to the will of the Father)**

While there is an obvious physical meaning relating to martyrs, those of us who are left are required to apply this in a spiritual way. And spiritual martyrdom is even more difficult than the physical version!

This is the most difficult challenge of our battle to overcome satan. So difficult that most of us pay lip service only! For our nature is contrary to God’s nature. Full stop. To win the victory over satan, to re-establish the best relationship with God, the one Adam had before his foray into the tempting delights of the forbidden fruit, we have to discard our own inherently sinful human desires. We must submit (what a horrible ‘s’ word!) to God’s perfect desires (His – not what we see them as being!)

for our life. Unnecessary? Too Hard? Let's see what Paul had to say in his letter to the Romans 8:6-8,16.

‘The mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (v16) Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness?’(Romans 8:6-8,16)

Jesus himself confirmed this.

‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’(John 8:34)

But Jesus set us free from our sins on the cross, didn't He? So we don't sin then? Or do we? So what is happening? I wondered about this until I was shown how we have two natures battling against each other inside us. Paul realised this - and his submission to God is well documented – literally unto death! We can see Paul's dilemma in reading Romans 7:7-25. The last sentence summarises.

‘So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.’(Romans 7:7-25)

And what a battle it is sometimes too! For our new, perfect nature in Jesus, still battles the remains of the old sinful nature that continues to rear its ugly head within us. Far too often in me for my liking! Dealing with the remnants of this old sinful nature is what dying to self is ultimately all about.

Jesus set the example.

The reality and challenge of this process for you and me, is to put the interests of God the Father above our own, to become like Jesus. The example He set in His amazing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

when He prayed for Himself before submitting to death on the cross is indelibly etched on my mind.

“.....My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”(Matthew 26:42)

Jesus had the option to say no to his Father but He chose to be obedient, even though it was going to cost Him his life. Worse still, to temporarily separate Him for the first time ever, from his Father. Remember those agonising last words on the cross. Were they about the physical pain He was in? No. Translated into English He cried out,

‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’(Matthew 27:46).

This ultimate submission required of Jesus, is what the Father is calling all of us to, in the spirit. Don't let's kid ourselves - Jesus didn't want to go through this ultimate, horrendous experience. But He did it because of His commitment to the Father. It is no easier for us.

This full, 100% submission to the will of the Father is the final step that enables to achieve victory over satan. It is the real test of our commitment to our spiritual walk, taking a lifetime to achieve. But, as we do it.....

²¹ To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”(Revelation 3:21-2)

LAMB OF INHERITANCE

Of the Kingdom

THE STORY

Looking at the book of Revelation, we need to understand that its apocalyptic writing style is highly symbolic. It was written to believers, in a time of persecution towards the end of the first century. To keep the believers safe, much was written in a code that they but not their persecutors, would understand.

We also need to understand that in Jewish culture, life is regarded as a process, a progression, whereas we view it as a series of events. Hence prophecy, in Jewish thought, is ongoing. An earlier prophecy can be expected to have past, present and future fulfilment. However, with our Western (Greek) understanding, we look at Revelation as a series of one-time events. So we discuss whether their fulfilment is past, present or future. We have Preterists, Historicists, Futurists, Pre and Post Millennialists. Yet in Jewish thought, all could possibly be true! For prophecy is expected to have past, present and future meanings. Now that' s a thought!

While, with our Western outlook, we view the Kingdom of God as coming at the end of the age when Jesus returns, Jesus, a Jew, revealed it as a spiritual kingdom that exists now for those prepared to grasp hold of it, as well a physical one later. Like God, the kingdom has always been there. We need to absorb the Jewish way of reaching out to a God who has always been, and always will be there. In a similar way we need to seek the kingdom now.

So let' s have a brief look at the kingdom of the Lamb now, and the kingdom of the Lamb to come, in light of the above.

THE SCROLL AND THE LAMB (THE KINGDOM NOW)

The Lamb crucified, has purchased believers with His blood and so is worthy to open the scroll of the seven judgements upon the earth.

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:6-10)

For Jesus who is the Lamb of God, is worthy of all our worship.

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:11-14)

The first four seals were opened, one by one, and their respective judgements such as war, famine, plague were delivered upon the earth by riders on white, red, black and pale horses.

With the third seal however, there was a group of people who would not be judged by the scales the rider carried, those fully committed Christians who have sought out the kingdom. The verse refers to the Feasts of the Lord.

*⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, (Symbolic of Pentecost) and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, (Symbolic of ' Firstfruits' , part of Passover) and do not damage the oil and the wine!" (Feast of Tabernacles)
(Revelation 6:6)*

In the midst of the famine, those believers who simply believe in Jesus (Passover) or have also accepted the infilling of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) will be affected by the high prices of the famine marketplace. But those who seek the kingdom, who are prepared to submit themselves 100% to the Fathers will, (Tabernacles) will not be damaged. Yes, those who will submit to spiritual death to self.

They will join with those who suffer the physical death of martyrdom, as revealed in the fifth seal.

*⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.
(Revelation 6:9-11)*

The sixth seal judgement is of earthquakes and other earthly and heavenly events that show the wrath of God and the Lamb.

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17)

The story goes on to symbolically describe the 12,000 'sealed' from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, before coming back again to those in white robes, ones who have withstood the great tribulation, who have found the kingdom, who have purified themselves in 'the blood of the Lamb' .

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, 'they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"
(Revelation 7:13-17)

The opening of the final, seventh seal, shows the separation of the saints from the unrighteous, prayers from the saints and judgement upon the unrighteous.

THE NEW JERUSALEM (THE KINGDOM TO COME)

Finally, at the end of the age, Jesus will physically return to rule and reign upon the earth with His bride, from the New Jerusalem.

⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.
(Revelation 21:9-12)

There is no need for a Temple, for the curtain has been torn in two through Jesus shedding His blood, giving up His life on the cross, so that our relationship with the Father might be restored.

²² *I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation :21:22-27)*

The river of life flows down from the throne of God and the Lamb. And by the ever present ' fruit of the Spirit' of the tree of life, the godly actions of the submitted saints of the kingdom, they will rule and reign with Jesus forever.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5)

To end John' s vision, the Lamb of God, Jesus, promised three times, He would be returning soon.

⁷ *'Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.'* (Revelation 22:7)

¹² *'Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)*

²⁰ *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)*

KINGDOM INHERITANCE THROUGH THE CROSS

Jesus died on the cross in order that we might receive our spiritual inheritance.

¹⁵ *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15)*

Which is the promise of eternal life.

³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Peter 1:3-5)*

How can we be assured of this? Our assurance comes through the deposit of the Holy Spirit, living in believers. He assures us of our salvation and inheritance of the kingdom.

¹³ *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)*

It is done! Jesus did it all on the cross. Our kingdom inheritance is guaranteed when we ' believe' (give ourselves up to Him, take ourselves out of our own keeping and entrust ourselves into His keeping).

⁶ He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (Revelation 21:6-7)

OUR RESPONSE

The key response to the message of the inheritance of the kingdom is one of righteousness and holy living. Scripture after scripture highlights the fact that the kingdom of God is to be a living reality in our lives. When we become a follower of Jesus we are to develop the behavioural characteristics in our lives that He displayed in His. These are commonly known as the 'fruit of the Spirit' .

¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Galatians 5:19-26)

Our nature is to be washed clean, to be sanctified, in spiritual terminology, in order to inherit the kingdom.

⁹ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

This requires a commitment greater and much different to that which the Jews in Old Covenant society were used to. Under Jewish expectation, salvation came through being a member of a godly family, for Jewish thought revolves around the family unit. But Jesus came with a radically different message, saying that personal commitment is required, and that many who look good here on earth, will not do so in the kingdom and vice versa.

²⁸ Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. (Matthew 19:28-30)

We are expected to help others, to be diligent and not become lazy in His work, in order to inherit the promise of the kingdom.

¹⁰ God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. ¹¹ We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. ¹² We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. (Hebrews 6:10-12)

Our response to being rescued from the kingdom of darkness is to bear fruit with patience and endurance, in order to inherit the kingdom.

¹⁰ And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the

*Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
(Colossians 1:10-14)*

I'm sorry (Well, not really!) to keep emphasising the need for living out our faith time and again, but it is vitally important to both get this understanding and to apply it in our lives. For it is only then that we can come into the full inheritance of the kingdom, whose entry has been made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Lamb of God, on our behalf.

¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Ephesians 1:18-23)

The Lamb has been honoured high above all. He will reign with His church, those who receive the inheritance of the kingdom of God. Amen. Come Lord Jesus, come.