

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-22 Atonement: The Old Testament Sacrifice

A young married couple had their first major argument. The husband had come home from work and his dinner was not ready for him. This made him extremely angry. He was tired and hungry, and his wife was being very thoughtless. Suddenly both of them were shouting at each other. Neither of them could understand why the other could not see their point of view. The wife was so angry that she began to say cruel things to her husband. The man was just the opposite. The angrier he became, the less he said. Finally, he simply stood to his feet and marched out of the house, leaving his wife very annoyed.

Later, when both of them had calmed down, they sat together and tried to discuss what had happened. They soon realized that neither of them had made clear to the other what their expectations were. The husband said that he wanted his food ready for him when he came home from his day's work. His wife was willing to do this, but the husband did not come home at the same time each day. She did not want to serve him food that was cold. So, she had everything prepared, but not cooked. She waited until he came home before starting to cook the food. Once each of them understood what the other expected, life became easier. The husband agreed to call his wife when he was leaving work. She could then begin cooking the food, so that it would be hot and ready when he entered the home.

It is very difficult to have relationships when those involved do not communicate to each other. This is especially important when they expect certain things of each other. God wanted his children, the Israelites, to understand what he expected from them after Moses led them out of Egypt. His basic expectation was that the Israelites would obey the Ten Commandments. God would then add to these laws other rules that would define their behavior with each other and with God. At the center of these laws were those that governed sacrifices. God established five kinds of sacrifices and offerings.

The first is the ***burnt offering***. This offering was given for the atonement for sin and as an expression of devotion to God. Bulls, sheep, goats, doves, or pigeons would be sacrificed and then burnt upon an altar. This offering was critical to relationship with God. It reminded each person of their sinful state and that the shedding of blood was necessary for atonement.

The ***grain offering*** was a voluntary expression of devotion to God. Its purpose was to recognize his goodness and how he had met the needs of his people. This offering was usually cooked bread or cereal. Part of this offering was burnt before the Lord and the remainder was given to the priests as food. The grain offering was often given at times of harvest.

The ***peace offering*** could be cattle, sheep, or a goat. It could also include bread or grains. The purpose of the peace offering was to consecrate a meal between two or more parties before God. They shared that meal together in fellowship of peace and a commitment to each other's future prosperity. In this offering, the edible part of the animal was prepared to be eaten, while the inedible part of the animal was burnt as a sacrifice to God. This offering was critical to the relationship of people with each other.

The *sin offering* was used to atone for unintended sins or matters of ritual impurity. Animals could be totally burnt or prepared to be eaten as in the peace offering.

The last general kind of sacrifice was the *guilt offering*. This offering did not deal with removing the emotion of guilt, but rather had to do with the payment demanded for being guilty. In some instances, this involved an offering with a specific monetary value or actual currency.

All of these sacrifices were designed to assist humankind in their relationship with God. These sacrifices kept people sensitive to their sinful condition. They laid the foundation of understanding that the Messiah would one day reconcile people to God. But none of these sacrifices were adequate to actually pay the price for a person's sin. They could not remove the guilt that was the result of breaking God's laws. Every person was guilty of breaking the law and thus condemned to death. The blood sacrifices showed a person's submission to God. The blood of animals, however, could not actually atone for the sin and guilt. Thus, every person died because of their sins.

In Theology 131 "God's Plan," you learned about death in the Old Testament time. When a person died, their soul descended into *Sheol* or the grave. The grave was divided into two places: Hell, which was hot and tormenting; and Paradise, which was a pleasant place of rest. Those who sought after God and offered sacrifices in the hope of their redemption went to Paradise. The souls of those who did not live for God descended into hell and torment. Many ask why those who had offered sacrifices for their sins did not ascend directly to God. Instead they were imprisoned in the grave. The answer is simple: The blood of animals cannot pay the price for the sins of a man or woman. You will learn more about this in your next lesson.

This lesson is **important** because it demonstrates how God established the rules of sacrifice in the Old Testament. He wanted men and women to understand what was expected of them.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that none of the sacrifices, including those that involved the shedding of blood, were adequate to truly atone for a person's sin.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. How many types of sacrifices did God give to the Israelites? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, "God gave five different types of sacrifices to the Israelites," you are correct.
2. What was the name of the offering that God gave the Israelites in regard to atoning for their sins? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "God gave the Israelites the burnt offering to atone for their sins," you are right.
3. Could the sacrifices of the Old Testament actually make atonement for the sins of a person? [Pause]

A. If you said that the Old Testament sacrifices could not actually remove the sin and guilt from a person, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three more times until you can repeat the five types of sacrifices in the Old Testament and you can explain them to someone in your own words. Then find someone and teach them these five kinds of sacrifices. Discuss with them that although they helped the person's relationship with God, they were unable to make actual atonement for human sin. The reason is that the blood of an animal cannot pay the penalty for the sin of a person.