

Sacrifices



SABBATH—OCTOBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 3:9–21; Exodus 12:21–27; Leviticus 2:1–3; Genesis 22:1–19; Leviticus 17:10, 11; Philippians 4:18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Brothers and sisters, God has shown you his mercy. So I am asking you to offer up your bodies to him while you are still alive. Your bodies are a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God. When you offer your bodies to God, you are worshiping him” (Romans 12:1, NIV).

THE MEANING OF SACRIFICE IS A VERY IMPORTANT IDEA TO THE WHOLE GOSPEL. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word for “offering” or “sacrifice” is the act of coming closer to or bringing something to God. Similarly, the Greek word for “sacrifice” means “gift” and describes the act of making a sacrifice.

In the same way, the English word *offering* comes from the Latin word *offerre*, which means the giving of a gift. The word *sacrifice* is a combination of the Latin words *sacer* (holy) and *facere* (make). It means the act of making something sacred (holy).

This week we will look at some of the sacrifices that believers have offered to God. We will find that God has always called for sacrifices. And He is still doing so today.

Most important, God made the full sacrifice through Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 13**THE FIRST SACRIFICE
(Genesis 3:9–21)**

Read Genesis 3:9–21. What was God’s answer to Adam and Eve after they sinned?

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, a garden that was like a sanctuary (home of God on earth). And God gave them the opportunity to talk face-to-face with their Creator. Their first sin broke apart their relationship with God in a way that was almost not possible to fix. But God had already planned on how to deal with this broken relationship. Before there was any judgment against Adam and Eve, He gave them the hope of a Savior (Genesis 3:15).

“Adam and Eve stood as criminals before their God. They were waiting for the sentence that their sin caused. But before they receive the results of their sin [lifetime suffering and death], they listen to words that must have inspired them with hope [Genesis 3:15]. They must suffer . . . but they also look forward to total victory.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, page 16.

The Lord showed them the meaning of that victory. Then He made for them robes of skin to cover their nakedness and shame. The Bible does not say, but we can guess that an innocent animal had to die for this. And maybe we can conclude that the animal died as a kind of sacrifice (Genesis 3:21).

God’s gift of clothes for the sinners (Adam and Eve) became a symbol. The sacrifices in the desert sanctuary¹ guaranteed the special relationship between God and His people. In the same way, God’s gift of clothing in the Garden gave Adam and Eve the comfort of God’s unchanging goodwill toward them.

So, from the earliest days of human history, sacrifices taught that sinful humans could be united (joined as one) with God through the death of Jesus, of which those sacrifices were symbols.

Reread Genesis 3:9–21. What do you learn from the lesson that even before God spoke any words of judgment to the guilty pair, He gave them the promise of full victory? What does this show about God’s attitude (feeling) toward us, even in our sinful condition?



God made them robes of skins to cover their nakedness and shame.

1. desert sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

MONDAY—OCTOBER 14**KINDS OF OFFERINGS
(Exodus 12:21–27)**

In Old Testament times, believers could bring offerings for different reasons. They were to bring clean animals, grain, drink, and other things. The animal sacrifice is the oldest part of the sanctuary service. Together with the priestly service, the animal sacrifice belonged to the center of the Israelite (Jewish) service. Religious life without sacrifice was unheard of.

Which kinds of offerings are described in Exodus 12:21–27; Leviticus 2:1–3; Exodus 25:2–7; and Leviticus 4:27–31?

God started the sacrificial system² so that believers could enter into a close relationship with Him. This is why offerings could be brought in for different reasons: for thanksgiving, for showing joy and celebration, for a gift, for a petition (prayer) for forgiveness, for sin “payment,” for dedication, or for restoration (being made new).

Among the most important types of offerings were the burnt offering (Leviticus 1), the grain offering (Leviticus 2), the peace offering (Leviticus 3), the purification (cleansing) offering (Leviticus 4), and the sin offering (Leviticus 5:14–6:7). The first three sacrifices were voluntary offerings. They were to remind the giver

(and us) that, in the end, everything that we are and all that we have belong to God. The burnt offering symbolized (showed) the total dedication of the person making the offering. The grain offering symbolized the dedication of things we own to God. The offerings might have been food, animals, or something else. The peace offering was the only sacrifice in which the giver received and ate a part of the offering.

The other two sacrifices were required. They reminded the people that wrongs have results, but those wrongs can be “healed.” The purification offering was often called a “sin offering.” This was because it was offered after a terrible wrong was done or after the person knew that he or she had done a terrible sin.



Believers brought different offerings, such as animals, grain, or drink.

The purpose of the offerings shows that every part of our lives

² sacrificial system—in the Jewish sanctuary (house of worship) service, animals were sacrificed (put to death) as a symbol to show that the people of Israel received forgiveness of sins. This service helped point people to the future sacrifice (death) of Jesus Christ on the cross for their sins.

must come under God's control. How can you learn to surrender everything you have, or are, to Him? What happens when you do not do this?

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 15

SACRIFICE AT MORIAH (Genesis 22:1–19)

Read Genesis 22:1–19. What did Abraham learn about sacrifice?

What was God's purpose in this almost unbelievable challenge to Abraham's faith? Abraham's life with God had always followed God's promises: the promise of land, of future children, and of blessings; the promise of a son; and the promise that God would take care of Ishmael.³ Abraham sacrificed (gave offerings), but he did so always with the hope in something that God promised him. But in Genesis 22, Abraham did not get a promise from God. Instead, God told Abraham to sacrifice the living promise, his son Isaac. By acting on God's command, Abraham showed that God was more important to him than anything else.

"God commanded Abraham to kill his son for two reasons: (1) to teach him that the gospel was really important and (2) to test his faith. God permitted Abraham to go through great suffering during the dark days of his test. This was done to make him understand from his own experience

how great the sacrifice was made by God for man's salvation. No other test could have caused Abraham such suffering of soul as the offering of his son did. Even more so, God gave His Son to a death of great suffering and shame."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders and Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 154.



God asked Abraham to sacrifice his living son.

About the sacrifice, Abraham understood two important principles (important rules). First, no one but God Himself can bring the true sacrifice and the way of salvation. It is the Lord who will make the sacrifice. Abraham shows that he understands this principle by naming the place, "YHWH Jireh." This means "The-Lord-Will-Provide [Give]." Second, the real sacrifice serves as a substitute: one that saves Isaac's life. The ram is offered "in the place of" Isaac (Genesis 22:13, NASB). That animal, which God provided (gave), symbolizes (stands for) the Lamb of God,

3. Ishmael—Abraham's son from another woman named Hagar.

Jesus Christ, on whom “the LORD has placed [put] . . . the sins of all of us” (Isaiah 53:6, 7, NIV; Acts 8:32, NIV).

What an unbelievable surrender to God! Who can imagine what that experience must have been like for Abraham? Think about the last time that you had to reach out just by faith alone and do something that caused you a lot of suffering. What did you learn from your actions? And how well did you learn that lesson?



The ram offered in the place of Isaac symbolized Christ.

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 16

**LIFE FOR A LIFE
(Leviticus 17:10, 11)**

Read Leviticus 17:10, 11. What purpose does God give to the blood?

In these verses, God tells the Israelites

not to eat any blood. God gives an interesting reason for this command: blood stands for life. God has made sacrificial blood a substitute for human life. One life, represented by the blood, takes the place of another life. The principle (rule) of substitution was made clear on Mount Moriah when Abraham offered the blood of the ram in the place of the blood of his son. This is an important part of God’s laws for Israel in Bible times.

As in Genesis 22, God shows that it is He Himself who makes the sacrifice and forgives our sins. In the Hebrew, the / in “I have given it to you” (Leviticus 17:11, NKJV) makes it very clear. We cannot pay for our own ransom (payment for sins). God must pay the ransom for us.

This idea is different from that of other religions that use sacrifices. In the Bible, it is not a human who tries to reach and please God. It is God who makes the way for a person to come into His holy presence. And, in Christ, He Himself gives the blood for our ransom.

Read 1 Samuel 15:22 and Micah 6:6–8. What are some of the dangers of the ritual⁴ system?

God never planned the sacrificial service to be a substitute for the attitude (feeling) of the heart. The opposite is true. The sacrifices were to open the heart of the believer to the Lord. We may forget the fact that sacrifices express a spiritual relationship

4. ritual—any practice done so often that it may become meaningless.

between God and us and that they all point to a much greater sacrifice, Jesus Christ. If we do, we could easily mistake the sacrificial ritual for an easier way of receiving forgiveness.

Along with sacrifice, God really wants our hearts to be right with Him (Psalm 51:16, 17). The Israelite prophets always scolded the people for having false religious feelings. The prophets encouraged the people “to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:6–8, NASB; compare⁵ Isaiah 1:10–17).

In what ways do we face the same danger as explained above? Why is it often so hard to realize that we could be doing exactly the same as the Israelites of Bible times did in this area? How can we avoid this mistake?

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 17

SACRIFICES TODAY/LIVING SACRIFICE (Romans 12:1, 2)

After Christ’s sacrificial death there was no more need for animal sacrifices. But the New Testament does talk about the need for another kind of sacrifice instead.

According to Romans 12:1, 2; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15, 16; and 1 Peter 2:5, what kinds of offerings are we to bring to God today?

Language about the sacrificial system worked very well in describing the early Christians’ understanding of leading a life fully dedicated to (in service to) God. Paul was thinking about his own sacrifice, or coming death, when he described himself as a drink offering (Philippians 2:17, NKJV; 2 Timothy 4:6, NKJV).

What specific message is given to us in Romans 12:1? In what ways are we to show this truth in our own lives?

A “living sacrifice” means that the entire person is given to God. It includes the dedication of the body (Romans 12:1). This also means a full change of what is inside the person (verse 2). In other words, we are to be set apart (“holy”) for the purpose of serving the Lord. Christians will present (give) themselves wholly to the Lord because of the “mercies of God” in Romans 12:1–11. These verses show Christ as our Sacrifice, who opens the way for us to be saved.

Paul encourages Christians to copy and follow Christ. A true understanding of God’s grace⁶ leads a Christian to dedicate his or her life to God and to loving service for others. Surrender of self and the desires of self to the will of God is the only answer to Christ’s full sacrifice for us.

In the end, there has to be a close connection between our understanding of spiritual and doctrinal (having

5. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

6. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

to do with church beliefs) truth and our service to others. Every part of life should show the believer's true dedication to God. True worship is never just something that happens inside a person. It must show in a person's life as he or she serves others. Just think about what our Lord has done for us!

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "It had been hard even for the angels to understand the mystery of Christ's death as man's Substitute to save men. They wonder about the fact that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When God commanded Abraham to offer up his son, all heaven took great interest in it. The heavenly beings watched very carefully how Abraham went ahead to obey God's command. They watched how Isaac asked the question, 'Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' They saw how Abraham answered, 'God will provide [give] Himself a lamb.' And they witnessed how God stopped the father's hand from killing his son as a sacrifice and how God had given a ram in the place of Isaac. Then even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful plan that God had made for man's salvation."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 155.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① "Our feet will walk in God's paths. Our lips will speak the truth and

spread the gospel. Our tongues will bring healing. Our hands will lift up those who have fallen, and do many humble jobs such as cooking and cleaning, typing and mending. Our arms will embrace [hug] the lonely and the unloved. Our ears will listen to the cries of the people who suffer. And our eyes will look humbly and patiently toward God."—Adapted from John Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1994), page 322. In what ways does this statement show what it means to be a "living sacrifice"? Why is it only when we die to self that we could ever be able to live like this?

② As we learned during the week's lesson, one of the great problems that the people faced was seeing the sacrificial system as a goal in itself instead of a way of reaching the goal. The goal, in itself, is leading a life totally dedicated to God. This dedication also requires living a life in loving and humble service to others. As Seventh-day Adventists, we claim that we have much light and knowledge about the Bible. But why are we also in danger of thinking that the great truths we have are a goal in itself instead of a way of reaching the goal?

③ Think more deeply about the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. This troubling story might raise more questions about God than it answers. But why do you think anyone would argue that the story would cause such questions and feelings to be raised?