

WEEK 2: THE MYSTERY OF SACRIFICE

Introduction

1. Question: Why sacrifice? Why not just worship by preaching and singing songs?
2. Mystery of Sacrifice: If you can understand *sacrifice*, can understand the Cross/Mass

What is Sacrifice?

1. Sacrifice: comes from Latin expression, meaning “to make sacred/holy”
2. Holy: “set apart” for God (Hebrew *qadosh*)
3. What is needed for a Sacrifice?
 - a. Offering: sacred thing to be offered (animal, food, drink)
 - b. Priest: sacred person to offer the sacrifice
 - c. Altar: sacred place to offer the sacrifice
 - d. Completion: sacrifice is not complete until it’s consumed (by fire, by eating)
4. The *Catechism’s* Definition of Sacrifice (CCC 2099)

It is right to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion: “Every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness, is a true sacrifice.” -CCC 2099

- a. Adoration: love
 - b. Gratitude: thankfulness
 - c. Supplication: asking for forgiveness
 - d. Communion: relationship
5. Essence of Sacrifice: “To you, O Lord, *I lift up my soul...*” (Psalm 25:1)

To thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in thee I trust. - *Psalm 25:1-2*

The Sacrifice of Abel: Firstborn Lamb

1. The Story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-11)

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.” Cain said to Abel his brother, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me this day away from the ground; and from thy face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me.” Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden. -*Gen 4:1-16*

2. Cain: “*an offering of the fruit of the ground*” (Gen 4:3)
3. Abel: “*the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions*” (Gen 4:4; cf. Lev 3:16)
4. Blood: “*the voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground*” (Gen 4:11)

The Sacrifice of Melchizedek: Bread and Wine

1. The Story of Melchizedek (Gen 14:17-20)

After his return from the defeat of Ched-or-lao'mer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchiz'edek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand! And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.
 - Gen 14:17-20

2. Priest: first man called "priest" in the Bible (Gen 14:18)
3. Bread and Wine: un-bloody sacrifice of thanksgiving (for victory in battle)
4. King of Salem: ancient name for Jeru-salem (cf. Psalm 76:1-2)

The Sacrifice of Abraham: His Only Beloved Son

1. The Story of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22:1-19)

After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mori'ah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord will provide; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." -Gen 22:1-14

2. Father Abraham: offers his "only son" whom he "loves" (Gen 22:2)
3. Isaac the Son: carries "the wood" of "the burnt offering" up the "mountain" (Gen 22:3)
4. The Lamb: "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Gen 22:7)
5. Abram: "*God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son*" (Gen 22:8)
6. Mount Moriah: sacred place of sacrifice (Gen 22:2; cf. 2 Chron 3:1)

The Sacrifices of the Day of Atonement

1. Aaron: shall sacrifice a goat for a "sin offering" (Lev 16:11)

Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness. -Lev 16:21-22

2. Holy of Holies: high priest goes behind "the veil" once a year (Lev 16:2-3)
3. Atonement: high priest "sprinkles the blood" 7 times on the "mercy seat" (Lev 16:14)
4. Scapegoat: he "confess" the people's "sins"; "puts them" on the goat (Lev 16:20-22)

The Sacrifice of Christ

1. New Abel: innocent one whose blood cries out (Heb 12:24)
2. New Melchizedek: offers bread and wine in Jerusalem (Heb 5:8-10)
3. New Isaac: only Beloved Son of God the Father who dies on Moriah (Heb 11:17-19)
4. New Day of Atonement: Jesus is both sacrifice and high priest
 - a. Christ takes all “our sins” upon himself as suffering servant (Isa 53:10-12)
 - b. Christ enters into the heavenly Tabernacle to “offer himself” (Heb 9:11-14)

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. -Heb 9:11-14

- c. Jewish Tradition: miracle of the “scarlet thread” (Mishnah, *Yoma* 6:8)
5. The *Catechism* on the Sacrifice of Christ (CCC 615)
 - a. Unique: “completes and surpasses all other sacrifices”
 - b. Gift: “a gift from God the Father,” who handed over “his Son”
 - c. Self-Offering: “in freedom and love” the Son “offered his life to his Father”

Eucharistic Prayer I

Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them,
 as once you were pleased to accept *the gifts of your servant Abel the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith,*
 and the offering of your *high priest Melchizedek,*
 a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim. (*Daily Roman Missal*, p. 777)

Conclusion

1. Question: How can the Mass be a sacrifice when Christ died *2000 years ago*?
2. To Answer that Question: the Ultimate Jewish Sacrifice—the Passover!