

Why Did Jesus Die As A Sacrifice?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday June 15, 2008
Hebrews 9:11-18; 10:12-14, 17-18

"[Jesus Christ] entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12—NRSV).

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12—KJV).

When Moses instructed his gifted laborers to build the tabernacle (the tent for meeting with God) in the wilderness, they copied the pattern of the Holy Place in heaven that God showed Moses. When King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, his laborers constructed a copy of the Holy Place within it. After Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, He entered the real Holy Place in heaven.

Many religions offer sacrifices as part of their worship. Throughout history, some pagan religions have offered human beings (particularly children or young women) as sacrifices. However, God forbids our sacrificing people; therefore, He instructed the Jews to offer unblemished lambs, heifers, and goats for various purposes in their sacrifices. The first Levitical priest, Aaron, and the high priests who followed him, sprinkled the blood of a heifer and a goat on the mercy seat in the Holy Place to make atonement for the uncleanness and sin of the people. (see Leviticus 16:11-19).

When Jesus entered the Holy Place in heaven, He did not enter with the blood of animals, as did the Levitical priests when they entered the replica Holy Place in the tabernacle. Jesus entered the Holy Place in heaven with His own blood, which He shed when He died on the cross as a sacrifice for people's sins. Obedient to His Father in heaven, He willingly shed His blood so those who trust in Him will be saved from their sins throughout eternity. By His single offering, "he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). — Copyright 2008 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought or Class Discussion

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Think about your answers to the questions below before your Sunday school class meets, discuss in class, or use for further study. In some cases, I do not always write the questions to have a definitive right or wrong answer. In most cases, the questions should encourage everyone to think about how to apply biblical truths to their daily lives. Before beginning to answer the questions below, read the entire Scripture lesson in your favorite translation or compare translations. Write your thoughts in the space provided and take them to your Sunday school class for discussion.

1. How might believers help pagans who sacrifice their children by teaching them about Jesus willing to die as a sacrifice for them?
2. Why do you think God wanted the Jewish priests to sacrifice unblemished animals? In what ways was Jesus also unblemished?
3. What does Jesus shed blood do for us that the shed blood of animals could not do?
4. Why does the Bible call Jesus a mediator? Why do we need Him as a mediator?
5. Why is Jesus sacrificial death a single sacrifice that does not need to be repeated by Him or by us?

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