

Christ in the OT Sacrifices

BIBLE BASICS

The Meaning of Blood

Blood is a symbol of Life. Moses commands Israel:

“Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat.”

(Deuteronomy 12:23, NKJV)

Blood is giving of one's life. And the Book of Leviticus explains why blood is central to sacrifice:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

(Leviticus 17:11, NKJV)

From these texts we observe three clear truths.

1. Blood is not presented as a magical substance, but as a sign of life. To pour out blood is to offer life.
2. Blood is given “upon the altar” by God's command—atonement is not human invention but God's provision.
3. Atonement requires a life offered in place of another, teaching that reconciliation with God cannot be achieved by denial of sin but by God's appointed means of restoration.

St. Paul confirms this in his epistle to the Hebrews:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

(Hebrews 9:22, NKJV)

And similarly in Romans 3:25, “Whom God set forth as atonement by His blood.”

This does not mean God is bloodthirsty. It means sin is truly deadly, and restoration is costly. In fact, through the blood we receive redemption, remission of our sins and atonement. The Gospel of St. Matthew 20:28 “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Christ is our Passover. He offered to us His sacrificial Body and Blood, as the True Paschal Meal. As we receive Christ's sacrificial Body and Blood we also pass in Him and with Him to the new life, accepting His risen life.

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”
(1 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV)

The sacrificial system trains the conscience to recognize that communion with God is not regained by passivity and excuses, but by cleansing and active reconciliation.

Why Were Sacrifices Offered in the Old Testament?

The Law prescribes sacrifices not as random rituals, but as ordered responses to life with God in a fallen world. The sacrifices address:

1. **Communion with God** (thanksgiving, dedication, fellowship)
2. **Sin and uncleanness** (cleansing and restoration)
3. **The justice and mercy of God** (atonement provided by God)

The Old Testament commonly describes five offerings:

- **Burnt Offering**
- **Grain (Meal) Offering**
- **Peace (Fellowship) Offering**
- **Sin Offering**
- **Trespass (Guilt) Offering**

Sacrifices are offered for sins committed that displeases God and for death. Burnt, grain and peace offerings chiefly express **dedication, thanksgiving, and communion**. These voluntary offerings made by fire as a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord. Sin and Trespass offerings address death, which is mandatory. Mandatory atonement for the sins of the offerer. Offered outside the tabernacle.

When sacrifices are offered, the offerer acknowledges and admits his/her sin. Realization is essential for return to God and for acceptance of the offering/sacrifice. The offerer would not offer a sacrifice unless he realized his sinfulness. Realizes that the wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Understand the concept of redemption. St. Paul is clear in his epistles:

in Hebrews 9:22 says:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission”. Hebrews 9:12

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all.” Ephesians 5:2

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”. Ephesians 1:7

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”. Romans 3:24-25

“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”.

Every sin must be punished either in he who committed the sin or in someone else that takes his place (ransom). If you don't believe that Christ is the redeemer and you don't hide behind His divine grace and mercy, must pay the punishment yourself (death). Justice of God must be exercised one way or another. Either through the Cross of Christ or eternal death to he who rejects the ransom.

Believe that the sacrifice carries his/her sins. The Father's justice is now satisfied when He sees that the Sacrifice (Christ crucified) has carried the punishment of sin (death). Isaiah 53:6 “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”.

Principles When Offering: Confession and Identity

The offerer brings the offering to the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting. He confesses his sins while placing their hands on it. By placing his hands on it, the sins are transferred from the offerer to the sacrifice. This act is not casual. It is the ritual sign of **identity**: the offerer is no longer approaching God “as he is,” but through the sacrificial gift - showing a transfer of identity. The offerer put his own identity upon the sacrifice. The offeror and the sacrifice become one.

This teaches a theological principle that the New Testament later reveals more fully: sinners do not come to God by self-justification, but through a mediator and an offering appointed by God.

The Burnt Offering: Total Consecration

The burnt sacrifices are offered from bulls, lambs, goats, turtle doves, or pigeons. The burnt offering is wholly given to God. None is eaten. It is consumed in fire as a “sweet aroma” to the Lord. This teaches that true worship is not bargaining but **total surrender**.

The animal is required to be without blemish, and the whole sacrifice ascends to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect and willingly gave His life for us.

The offering is then skinned and cut into pieces which is a symbol of the examination that Jesus went through regarding his deed and words. This prepares us to understand Christ's perfect obedience:

“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

(Philippians 2:8, NKJV)

The burnt offering teaches that the heart of sacrifice is not merely suffering, but obedience offered to the Father, a theme fulfilled perfectly in Christ.

“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”

(Hebrews 5:8, NKJV)

The Grain Offering: The Life Offered in Thanksgiving

The grain offering is made of flour, oil, and frankincense, seasoned with salt, with no leaven or honey (Leviticus 2). Unlike the blood sacrifices, this offering highlights not death, but a life offered in thanksgiving and dedication.

From its elements, the theology becomes visible:

- **Flour** (ground fine) suggests a life yielded, formed, and prepared.
- **Oil** signifies anointing and consecration.
- **Frankincense** rises as fragrance—service offered to God.
- **Salt** signifies covenant faithfulness.

The prohibition of **leaven** teaches the rejection of corruption in what is offered to God, and the avoidance of **honey** warns against presenting worship as mere indulgence or self-pleasure.

This offering foreshadows Christ as the true bread of life, offered not only in death, but in the holiness of His entire earthly life.

The Peace Offering: Communion and Shared Joy

Cattle, sheep, or goats were the animals typically offered as peace offerings. These animals were to be without blemish, symbolizing the purity and perfection that God requires in those who approach Him. The offerer would place his hand on the head of the animal, signifying the transfer of his sins and guilt to the animal. The animal would then be slaughtered, and its blood would be sprinkled on the altar. The fat and certain choice parts of the animal would be burned on the altar as a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord.

The remainder of the peace offering was divided into three parts.

- One part was given to the priests as their portion,
- another part was given to the offerer and his family, and
- the third part was offered to the poor and needy.

This division of the offering symbolized the sharing and unity that was to exist among God's people.

The peace offering was often associated with joy and gladness. The offerer and the priest would eat together from the sacrifice, signifying their fellowship with one another and with God. It teaches that reconciliation culminates in **communion**.

Through the sacrifice of the animal, the offerer's sins were atoned for, and he was restored to a right relationship with God. In this way, the peace offering foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who offered Himself as a peace offering for the sins of the world. The peace offering is offered for thanksgiving to God, Eucharist. The peace offering therefore prepares us to understand that salvation is not only forgiveness of guilt, but entrance into shared life with God.

The peace offering also served as a reminder of the need for repentance and confession before communion.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”
(1 Corinthians 11:28, NKJV)

Christ here is a symbol of joy not only to the Father but to everyone as well. The peace offering is offered for thanksgiving to God, in the Eucharist.

In the burnt offering, Christ offers Himself to the Father while in the peace offering, He offers Himself to everyone. Through Christ we are reconciled with the Father, in the burnt offering, as only blameless males were offered. In the peace offering, the sacrifice could be of male and females (relating to the offeror).

The Sin Offering: Cleansing and Bearing Sin

Outside the tabernacle, a bull or a goat is offered as a sin offering. The sin offering, addressing uncleanness and sin, is associated with removal and separation because sin does not belong in the holy presence.

Here we must state the point carefully. It is not that “God cannot look” in the sense of weakness or limitation. Rather, Scripture teaches that God is holy, and sin cannot be embraced as acceptable. The separation of the sin offering teaches the seriousness of sin and the necessity of cleansing.

This prepares the mind for Christ, who bears sin not by becoming morally sinful, but by taking sin's burden and penalty upon Himself:

“All we like sheep have gone astray... and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”
(Isaiah 53:6, NKJV)

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree...”
(1 Peter 2:24, NKJV)

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV)

The Eucharist, a Christian sacrament, reflects this sacrificial offering. In the Eucharist, Christ offers Himself to the Father as both the "Offerer" (the Priest) and the "Offering" (the Sacrifice). Through our union with this Sacrifice, known as "Holy Communion," we identify with the sacrifice and receive forgiveness of sins. The prayer in the St. Basil Liturgy acknowledges this, praying, "We offer unto You Your gifts from what is Yours, for everything, concerning everything, and in everything."

The sin offering therefore teaches a canon-wide truth: God condemns sin, yet provides a bearer of sin so the sinner may be restored.

The Trespass Offering: Guilt, Restitution, and Healing the Breach

Like the sin sacrifice, the trespass offering is offered outside the Tabernacle. The Trespass offering involves presenting a male ram or its monetary equivalent to the Lord, along with restitution for any stolen or damaged property. Additionally, a one-fifth surcharge is added to the compensation, underscoring the gravity of the offense.

While the Sin Sacrifice primarily addresses the inherent nature of sin, the Trespass Offering focuses on the specific actions and consequences resulting from sinful behavior. Two distinct categories of Trespass Offerings are recognized in Scripture.

- **The first** pertains to offenses committed against the holy things of the Lord, such as mishandling consecrated objects or failing to adhere to prescribed regulations.
- **The second** category encompasses trespasses against individuals, involving actions that cause harm, injustice, or deprivation.

The trespass (guilt) offering addresses sin not only as corruption but as **damage**, harm done to God's holiness and to neighbor. It therefore includes restitution: what was taken or harmed must be made right, with an additional portion.

This offering deals with the act of sins. There are two types. The first is against the Holy things of the Lord and the second against people. Sin Sacrifice addressed the nature of sin while the Trespass Sacrifice addressed the act of sin. By Christ's death every sin can be forgiven.

This teaches that repentance is not merely sorrow, but restoration and healing of breaches. The trespass offering trains the conscience toward responsibility, without denying God's mercy.

Christ fulfills this not only by forgiving, but by restoring what sin has ruined. Crucially, the Trespass Offering finds its ultimate fulfillment in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Through His redemptive work on the cross, every sin, both in its nature and its actions, can be forgiven and reconciled. Christ's perfect sacrifice provides the necessary atonement for the transgressions of humanity, enabling believers to receive pardon, healing, and restoration in their relationship with God.

Christ on the Cross: Priest, Altar, and Offering

The sacrifices teach categories. The Cross reveals their fulfillment.

Christ is not merely a victim. He is the **High Priest** who offers Himself freely:

- He prepares the altar not in a building but on Golgotha.
- He carries the wood, as Isaac carried wood up the mountain, but He is the true beloved Son who completes the offering.
- He offers Himself, on the altar of sacrifice, in obedience, not compulsion.
- The fire of suffering consumed the sacrifice on the altar, signifying the washing away of the sins of all generations.

When Christ says:

“It is finished.”
(John 19:30, NKJV)

Before the sacrifice turned into ashes, Christ uttered the profound words, "It is finished." These words declares that the sacrificial pattern has reached its completion—not abolished as meaningless, but fulfilled as accomplished reality.

In response, we partake of the blood of the sacrifice, represented by the Eucharist. We symbolically sprinkle it around the altar, which represents our souls. This act signifies the cleansing and purification of our hearts and minds. As 1 Corinthians 3:16 states, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

The Blood of Christ and Our Communion

The blood shed from Christ's side holds immense significance in the salvation of mankind. Scripture teaches that remission, redemption, and sanctification are inseparable from the offering of Christ's life.

First, the New Testament confirms the Old Testament principle that forgiveness is granted through sacrificial blood:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”
(Hebrews 9:22, NKJV)

Yet Christ's blood is not merely shed on earth. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf:

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”
(Hebrews 9:12, NKJV)

This blood is also not held at a distance from the Church. In the Eucharist, believers receive true communion in what Christ offered:

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”
(1 Corinthians 10:16, NKJV)

Therefore, Christ’s sacrifice is not only an event to be remembered, but a reality in which we are permitted to participate. For those who are spiritually dead, Christ commands participation in His life:

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.’”
(John 6:53, NKJV)

Because Christ’s blood is offered “for us,” its effects are described in the strongest terms: justification, redemption, and forgiveness.

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”
(Romans 3:24–25, NKJV)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”
(Ephesians 1:7, NKJV)

At the Cross, then, Christ offers His life to the Father in perfect obedience; and through communion with Him, we become partakers of what He offered. His obedience is counted on our behalf because we are united to Him. The Father accepts the sacrifice from Him and receives us **in Him**.

Matthew 27:25 Clarified

The Gospel records that a crowd said:

“And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”
(Matthew 27:25, NKJV)

This verse must not be used to assign collective or perpetual blame to the Jewish people as a whole. In context, it describes a specific moment and a specific crowd. Judgment belongs to God alone, and the New Testament consistently teaches that all peoples stand in need of repentance and mercy. Theologically, Christ’s blood is not given to fuel hatred, but to bring forgiveness to the world—including those who once opposed Him, many of whom later believed (Acts 2:36–41).

The New Testament emphasizes that His blood secures true redemption:

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”
(Hebrews 9:12, NKJV)

And the Church receives this sacrifice sacramentally:

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?”
(1 Corinthians 10:16, NKJV)

Thus the sacrifices reach their goal: not continued slaughter, but union with Christ’s once-for-all offering.

What the Sacrifices Teach Us About Christ

From Scripture’s pattern, we learn:

- Blood signifies life offered, and atonement is God’s gift, not human invention.
- Sacrifice teaches that sin is deadly and cleansing is costly, yet mercy is provided.
- The offerings train Israel to recognize consecration, thanksgiving, communion, cleansing, and restitution.
- Christ fulfills all sacrifices as:
 - **Priest** (the One who offers)
 - **Offering** (the One offered)
 - **Atonement** (the One who reconciles)
 - **Communion** (the One shared)

In Christ, the sacrifices are not repeated because their purpose is accomplished. What remains is the life they were always meant to form: repentance, holiness, thanksgiving, and communion with God.



Review Questions

1. What is the blood a symbol of?
[Blood is a symbol of life.]
2. What are the 5 types of offering?
[burnt, flour/grain, peace, sin and trespass]
3. What does Burnt, grain and peace offering address?
[They address the sins that displease God, which is voluntary]
4. What is voluntary offering?
[Voluntary offerings made by fire as a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord.]
5. What does Sin and Trespass offerings address?
[They address death, which is mandatory.]
6. Where is the mandatory offering offered?
[Mandatory atonement for the sins of the offeror is offered outside the tabernacle.]
7. What does laying of the hand on the sacrifice mean?
[By placing of the hand, the sins are transferred from the offerer to the sacrifice.]
8. How did Christ prepare the Altar for His sacrifice?
[He carried the wood (Cross) of the burnt offering. The fire (His suffering) consumed the sacrifice on the altar (the sins of all generations).]
9. How is the Blood of the Eucharist related to the sacrifice?
[We take the blood of the sacrifice (Eucharist) and sprinkle it around the altar (our souls).]
10. How do we partake of Christ offering?
[Through our union with Christ (Eucharist) we become partakers of what Christ offered to the Father.]