

Holy Day Offerings: What does God want from us?

The church of God practices human sacrifice!

[I hope no tabloid reporters read this introduction! We'll be in some trouble if they do.]

I will return to the subject of human sacrifice in a moment; but at this time we are approaching God's Holy Days and, as always, on each of these Holy Days we will be giving an offering to God. We have often ask ourselves the question, however, "What does God expect from us for an offering?"

In this article I would like to show you that, although our physical monetary offerings certainly are important and very necessary, there is another kind of offering that is more important to God.

Living Offerings and Sacrifices Required

Let us go back to my opening statement... that God's church practices human sacrifice. Here is what God instructs His church through the apostle Paul:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

Yes, God does want us to give offerings to Him on His Holy Days and at other times; but more than that, He wants *you* and He wants *me!* He wants us three hundred and sixty five days of every year of our Christian lives. However, He does not want us as lifeless burnt offerings. He wants us as living offerings and sacrifices.

How can we Offer Ourselves as Living Sacrifices?

God tells us in many places throughout the scriptures what He wants from us more than He wants physical offerings and sacrifices. Let us just home in on a few of those relevant scriptures mentioned in the New Testament. Yes, in the New Testament, but you might be interested and somewhat surprised to know that all of these requirements were quoted from *Old Testament* scriptures. This shows us that God does not change in what He requires of His people (Hebrews 13:8). It also shows that, even in the Old Testament, God considered these things as more important. There are lots more Old Testament scriptures on this point than we have space for here.

So what are God's requirements that constitute our living sacrifice, these requirements that are a higher priority than physical offerings?

i) Showing Mercy

Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. (Matthew 9:13 RSV)

And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (Matthew 12:7 RSV)

In both statements, Jesus was quoting from and expanding upon Hosea 6:6 which reads:

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.

He tells us that we Christians are to have mercy; both to fellow-Christians and to non-Christians, most of whom *will become* Christians at some time in the future.

ii) Loving God and our Fellow-men

And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that He is one, and there is no other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 12:32-33 RSV)

Here, a Jewish scribe (who certainly seemed to "know his Bible") in conversation with Jesus, quoted from no less than five Old Testament scriptures. Here they are:

You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18 RSV)

To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides Him. (Deuteronomy 4:35 RSV)

And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:5 RSV)

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. (I Samuel 15:22)

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. (Psalms 40:6)

This scribe also agreed with Jesus that to love God and our neighbours to the best of our ability is more important than all of the offerings and sacrifices.

iii) Doing God's Will

If I had the space here, I would include the whole of the tenth chapter of the book of Hebrews plus a couple of sections from chapters nine and thirteen, all of which relate to this subject. If you care to study these sections in your own Bible study time, I am sure that you will find them very enlightening. If you have time, please look up the words "sacrifice" and "offering" in a Bible concordance and do a study on them. But for now I will just quote from Hebrews 10:5-9:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, "Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body (*His church*) hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I (*that is, Jesus*) said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book." When He said above, "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then He added, "Lo, I have come to do thy will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.

Here, the apostle Paul was inspired to quote Psalm 40:6-8 from the Old Testament:

Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire; but thou hast given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then I said, 'Lo, I come; in the roll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart.' (RSV)

What was abolished (NKJV: taken away)? The apostle Paul (if it was in fact him who wrote the book of Hebrews) had been an orthodox and zealous Jew. He is here teaching that God had abolished the Old Testament system of sacrifices and offerings, and replaced them with the requirement to have His will done... first by Jesus, then by His spiritual brothers and sisters who were to imitate Him in this way.

Paul had written to the Ephesus congregation of God's church that they should be imitators of their spiritual Father and Brother in love and living sacrifice:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2 RSV)

To summarize then, we have looked at how we members of God's church can offer ourselves as living sacrifices, and we have examined just a few of the things that God looks upon as more important than physical sacrifices and offerings: mercy, love for God, love for our fellow men, and the doing of God's will.

However, in a few weeks time we will be participating once again in Holy Day offerings... which we may look upon as physical sacrifices. I hope what I have written in this article will not affect the quality of the offerings given by each person participating in those Holy Days. Obviously, that was not my intention. It is just a matter of priorities... God's priorities.

Rather, our mercy, our love for God and for our neighbours can be manifested by our offerings, and the money collected for our offerings does go toward the doing of God's will on earth.

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