

HEBREW SCRIPTURE ENIGMAS RESOLVED

Lesson 02

THE ODD PHENOMENON OF OFFERING SACRIFICES

THE CREATOR! - THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR!

First there was nothing, then God created absolutely everything. Did He need anyone to advise Him on the ethical issues involved or on how to get it done?

"Who has sussed out the the Eternal Being's Spirit, or being His mentor has educated Him? To whom did He resort for guidance, thus gaining acumen, plus instruction in ethical correctness, plus skill training, so endowing Him with perception?" Isaiah 40:13-14.

No-one has! God spoke and it was! The literal Hebrew of Gen.1:3 is "light be and light was.

This knowledge is absolutely fundamental to correct religious insight. Even as it says in the Muslim's own holy book, the Qur'an "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: "Be," and it is." Surah 2:117.

He spoke - it was. It strikes one with tremendous awe. This awe is fundamental to the beginning of godliness. Godliness, (from the Greek word eusebeia) means to be deeply in awe, in deep awe of the almighty God. Deep awe for God holding complete sway over our minds and lifestyle.

"Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell us, if you think you have it all worked out!" Job 38:4

"The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and do obeisance to Him who lives for ever and ever, even shed their crowns before the throne, saying, O Lord and our God, YOU are WORTHY to receive fame and esteem and supremacy: for you have generated everything, and they existed and were generated because of your will" Rev.4:10-11.

He has only to will it and it is. So what need has Almighty God of anything?

THE APPARENT NONSENSE OF SACRIFICES

Some say that sacrifices are a way of offering the best of one's possessions to God. A very noble thought, but

what need has the Creator of the heavens and the earth of anything from us?

Does the offering of crops benefit Him in some way, even if it is the best? Does the slaying of an innocent animal really please Him? Does He enjoy the aroma of roasted meat? Does the cleansing of the animal in water in preparation for the sacrifice make it more acceptable to Him?

WHERE DID THE RITUALS COME FROM ORIGINALLY?

In Judaism and other eastern religions, where did the religious dowsing of hands before meals come from and where did the dowsing of hands and feet before worship originate? Their ancient religious cleansing ritual of immersing themselves in the household baptistry, along with all the goods bought, on return from the market, where did that start? How did the practise of immersing Jewish proselytes begin? When and why did people start sacrificing animals?

CORRUPTED RITUALS

I don't need to explain that human sacrifices are heinously evil. However the whole idea of appeasement by sacrifice, human or animal, is irrational. Yet these, which were widespread practices, must have had a common origin. How could different, widely separated cultures, independently dream up the same far-fetched ideas of sacrificing to a creator god and of atonement by sacrifice?

ARE THEY TRACEABLE?

Let's consider the sacrificing of animals for atonement. Many people find this concept the most difficult to swallow.

Ancient historical documents show sacrificing of animals for appeasement goes back to the dawn of history, about 6,000 years ago, in other words to the first human beings. The records state that the sons of Adam were the first to make offerings to God. Genesis 4:1-7. Evidently God had required it, for one offering was rejected and the other accepted as that of a righteous man, Hebrews 11:4 & 1 John 3:12.

Animal sacrifices continued to be offered. The practice was regularised under the Law given by God through

Moses, almost 3,500 years ago, and further regularised at the building of Solomon's temple, about 3,000 years ago.

God legislated:-

- 1) Who should perform the ceremonies.
- 2) How He should prepare himself for carrying out the ceremonies
- 3) How the animal should be prepared for sacrifice
- 4) How it should be sacrificed
- 5) What the sacrifices signified, for example the annual sacrifice offered for the atonement of the peoples' sins. Lev.16:27-34

When Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem, ten brass tanks were provided, five on each side of the temple. The capacity of each was approximately 200 gallons. These were for dunking the sacrifices in before they were slaughtered, 1.Kings 7:38, 2.Chronicles 4:6 (note: the NIV's translation of these verses is defective). Ellicott's commentary points out that the Hebrew word strictly means "thrust, plunge". The innocent animal was thrust in the tank water to prepare it for sacrifice. WHY?

THE APPARENT NONSENSE OF ATONEMENT BY ANIMAL SACRIFICE

Human beings do the sinning. Why kill an innocent animal and conclude that that will put it right?

The by-proxy bloodshed of animals for man's atonement is repulsive, objectionable and makes no sense until seen fulfilled in the Messiah, the Christ. What happened to the Lord Jesus was also repulsive, objectionable. He underwent that for us. In that is the clue.

MOSES HAD TO FOLLOW THE PATTERN - EXACTLY! - WHY ?

Was it just because God said so ? It is true that we should do exactly what God says, but did God require exact performance of these strange rites just to be pedantic?

Hebrews 8:5 "Since Moses was given a warning when he was about to make the tabernacle", it is evident that "the performance the temple priests carried out was a

demonstration and portrayal of the heavenly things, for God said, "see that you make everything just like the pattern shown to you in the mountain."

It is vital to get to the bottom of the underlying reason for this directive!

ALL THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE LORD JESUS HAD BEEN PREDICTED

After His resurrection, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Lord Jesus said "'O foolish ones, and slow in your heart to accept everything the prophets have said. Didn't the Christ have to suffer these things, even to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses, then all the prophets, He explained to them the things in all the scriptures about HIMSELF." Luke 24:25-27.

It all pointed to Him. It was there, in their sacred scriptures, all the way through, all the time. They all spoke eloquently of Him.

Furthermore the prophets who predicted these things, themselves tried to fathom "if the Spirit of Christ in them (whilst giving evidence in advance about Christ's suffering and the subsequent glory) indicated when or in what circumstances" it would happen, 1.Peter1:11.

Every time an innocent first-born male lamb or bullock was slain for atonement, it spoke of the Lord Jesus.

WHAT DID THE LORD MEAN BY:-

"Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness"? Matt. 3:15.

Of necessity, because of their incongruity, lots of questions arise when considering Old Testament ritual.

Why have a priestly cast? Why must they be sons of Aaron? Why must the sacrifices be first-born male and without blemish? Why a day of atonement?

More questions than we can answer here. Sufficient to say that none make complete sense until seen fulfilled in the New Covenant.

But why, when John the Immerser expressed reluctance to immerse Him, did the Lord Jesus say to him "Thus it becomes US to fulfil all righteousness"?

God told John that the Son of God would be revealed to him and that is why John came immersing people in water, John 1:6,31-34. But he did the immersing for the removal of repentant persons' sins. The Lord Jesus was totally

without sin. What significance had immersion for Him?

When the angel predicted John's birth to Zechariah, his father, Zechariah was carrying out his priestly duties. He was a descendant of Aaron. So John also was of Aaron's priestly cast.

A priest would enter upon his duties at about 30 years of age. John had turned thirty.

Every time a priest thrust the innocent victim into the tank of water he was preparing it for sacrifice. The Jews were well aware of this. It went on all the time in the temple at Jerusalem.

They saw it as an act of dedication.

So then, John was preparing the victim for sacrifice, the innocent for the guilty.

EXACTLY ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN

Tampering with the pattern would have been tampering with the prediction.

Why immerse the Lord Jesus in water? It was a dedication. It was a burial AND a resurrection! Praise the Lord!

John the immerser came to prepare the way of the Lord. He came to prepare the way of "the Lamb of God"!

HAVING PREPARED HIM FOR SACRIFICE JOHN DECLARED FOR ALL TO HEAR:-

"BEHOLD! THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD." John 1:29

IN CONCLUSION

A reading from the New Testament scriptures, the letter written to Hebrew Christians chapter 9 verses 1 to 15:-

"Then the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and also a terrestrial sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared; in the first section, which was called the Holy Place, was the lampstand, plus the table, and the display loaves. Then after the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest Place of All; Which housed the golden altar and the chest of the covenant, overlaid all-round with gold, in which were the golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod which budded, the tablets of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory,

overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak in detail.

Now when these things were thus prepared, whereas the priests always went into the first tabernacle, carrying out the ceremonialism. the high priest alone went into the second, every year, never without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the ignorant errors of the people: the Holy Spirit this way indicating that the way into the holiest place would not be disclosed whilst the first tabernacle was still standing: This was an illustration for the time when gifts and sacrifices were being offered which could not reinstate the devotee's conscience; being mere physical, food, drink and various immersion ordinances, imposed until the time of restitution.

But Christ having arrived, the high priest of the good things which have come about, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (not made by hand, that is not of this creation) into the holiest place, once for always, having obtained eternal redemption. Neither was this through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood.

So if sprinkling polluted persons with the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sanctifies so that the flesh is purified: By how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works in order to serve the living God? Therefore, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so as death having occurred for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those having been called may receive the promised eternal inheritance."

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