

The Greatest Sacrifice



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and gave up His spirit. John 19:30*

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The Greatest Sacrifice

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And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. John 19:30*

Chapter 1 - Sacrifices

A number of years ago, my husband and I were riding in our car with my parents who were sitting in the back seat of our car. Within the context of our conversation, my parents asked me if we, meaning my sister, my brothers and I, had everything we needed as children. I was quite surprised at their question but quickly turned to face them and said, “We always had everything we needed and more.” I remember the look on their faces. Their countenances lit up and they had the biggest smiles on their faces. You see my parents were not wealthy people but yet they supplied for our needs and much more and it greatly pleased them to do this for us.

It would be a number of years later at my father’s funeral that I saw again the depths of their love and sacrifice. I knew that my parents had made arrangements for their funerals and had purchased their gravestone. But what I did not realize until at my Dad’s grave site that my name and the names of my siblings were engraved on the back of their grave stone. Seeing our names engraved on their gravestone somehow transcended our time here on earth together. It had a profound effect on my life; one that I will never forget.

Exercise 1 - Sacrifices

What is the greatest sacrifice someone has made for you and how did it make you feel?

What is the greatest sacrifice you have made for someone and how did it make you feel??

Chapter 2 - The Greatest Sacrifice

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ make up about one-fifth of the narratives in the four Gospels. The Epistles are also filled with references to this historic event. According to 2 Timothy 3:16 all Scripture is inspired by God, which means the death and resurrection of Jesus was of supreme importance to the Holy Spirit, the author of Scripture.

The cross of Jesus Christ is said to be the most memorable image of all time. It transcends time, cultures, history and events throughout history. But why is it the most memorable event in the history of mankind? Let's go to the Scriptures for our answers.

Exercise 2 - Jesus' Chief Purpose in Coming to Earth (Incarnation)

According to the Scriptures below Jesus' primary reason for coming to earth was not to set an example for us or to teach us doctrine, but it was for what purpose?

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9, 14

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:26

*You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.
1 John 3:5*

His death was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. That end is the redemption of the lost through Jesus' death on the cross. The teaching of Jesus' death for our redemption is termed the "gospel" which means "good news." The death of Jesus for man's sin means that man does not need to die for his sin.

Exercise 3 - Subject of Apostolic Preaching

According to the Scriptures below what was the subject of apostolic preaching?

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Galatians 6:14

Jesus is God

The death of Jesus is an absolute necessity if man is to be saved. We know from our earlier studies that Christ was with God and is God before the world was. He is also called “the Word.” A word is a medium manifestation, a means of communication, and a method of revelation.

Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. John 17:5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. Revelation 19:13

Paul calls Christ “the first-born of all creation,” the heir of all things. Christ was there when creation began and it was for Him as well as through Him that the whole work was done.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Colossians 1:15

in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. Hebrews 1:2

John writes that “all thing came into being through Him; apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. John 1:3

Paul says that through Him are all things, we are through Him, and in Him all things hold together. These Scriptures represent Christ as creator, preserver, and the goal of creation.

*yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.
1 Corinthians 8:6*

Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. Colossians 1:16

When God was about to create man there was first a council in the Godhead. God said, “let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26). Proverbs 8:30 says, “then I was beside Him, as a master workman.”

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Genesis 1:26

Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, Proverbs 8:30

Christ in the Old Testament

We learned in our earlier study that Christ appeared in the Old Testament as Son, Jehovah, angel of Jehovah, and the angel of the Lord. He appeared to Abraham and stayed his hand when he was about to slay his son Isaac (Genesis 22:11-18). As the angel of God, he told Jacob that he would prosper him in the face of Laban’s unfair dealings with him (Genesis 31:11-13).

The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the bush and asked him not to draw near, for the ground was holy. (Exodus 3:2-5). The angel of God went before Israel when they left Egypt (Exodus 14:19; 23:30; 32:34). These are but a few of the sitings in which we learn that Christ had a distinct personal existence during the Old Testament

period and that he had repeated dealings with the Israelites. We shall soon see why it is so important to understand that Christ is God.

Reasons for the Incarnation

We know from the nativity accounts in Matthew and Luke that Jesus became man (incarnation) and it was due to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Even secular history acknowledges that Jesus lived. Let's look to Scripture to determine the reasons for the incarnation of Jesus.

Exercise 4 - Reasons for Jesus' Incarnation

1. _____

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." Genesis 3:15

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Scripture reveals that there are two lines of prediction concerning the coming of Christ: he was to come as a Savior from sin and as a King in His Kingdom. Christ died as a substitutionary sacrifice and became the world's Savior and the cornerstone of the church.

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. Matthew 16:18

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, Ephesians 2:20

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
Ephesians 5:25*

2. _____

*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father,
He has explained Him. John 1:18*

*Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me,
Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
John 14:9*

The relationship of the child of God to His heavenly Father is a New Testament concept.

3. _____

*Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a
merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins
of the people. Hebrews 2:17*

His life on earth experiencing all that we experience, hunger, loneliness, weary, temptation,
etc, was a preparation for His present priestly ministry.

4. _____

*Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now
once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the
sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:26*

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a
ransom for many." Mark 10:45*

*You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.
1 John 3:5*

He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

5.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Hebrews 2:14

Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. John 12:31

6.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 1 Peter 2:21

7.

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. Revelation 5:6

Christ, the lamb standing as if slain, will open the seals of the book, the title-deed to the purchased possessions, to usher in His second coming.

Chapter 3 - Man's Need Before God

Man's need before God is similar to a story of an elderly man's last request for his son. The man raised four children, one of which was always in trouble with the law. The man was getting up in years and was on his deathbed and had one request of his best and dearest friend (since his wife had died 5 years earlier). His request was to let his son find favor in the eyes of the law – do whatever you need to do: just let this son of mine find favor and acceptance again with his fellow men.

The friend knew the task was next to impossible but he did not have the heart to tell his oldest and dearest friend of over 50 years, the one who had always been there for him, that he could not help him with his last request. So he set out to accomplish his best friend's last request.

He went to the courthouse to see exactly what the outstanding charges were. He was amazed with what he saw. He knew there had been a lot of problems over the years, but when he saw all the charges written down in one place it was overwhelming!! He had to go sit down and try to take it all in and try to figure out what he must do to correct the long list of wrongs that had been committed.

First he would have to pay the money back the son had stolen which appeared to be in the millions. Then there would be court costs, fines, and attorney fees; another \$100,000+ and the list went on and on.

The task was growing in size and seemed insurmountable but it was after all for his life long friend. Next he had to figure out who to approach to pay all the monies owed. Someone would need to represent the son for he had angered so many people. His victims and the community were all so mad no one would have anything to do with him.

He knew that to accomplish his friends last request, he would have to satisfy the victims and the community and somehow bring them altogether. It would take a lot of work: the young man would indeed need a new identity in order to be accepted.

Exercise 5 - Christ's Work on the Cross

Although no one could completely emulate Christ's work on the cross, the friend in the story illustrates what Christ did for us on the cross. Read the Scriptures below and write in the description of what Christ did for us on the cross.

1. _____

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 1 Peter 2:22

Just as in the story above the friend is not acting on behalf of his own sin, Christ did not die for His own sin, but the sin of the world. Christ was the substitutionary sufferings of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world.

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

2. _____

who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." Exodus 34:7

'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.' Num 14:18

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; Romans 3:25

Just as in the story above, the friend knew he would have to satisfy all the sins of his friend's son, the death of Christ supplies the satisfaction to remove the outrage of sin caused by man. God will not clear the guilty without substitution. Sin must be punished. Since holiness is one of God's fundamental attributes it is only reasonable the God should be given satisfaction. Exercise 2-6 have to do with satisfying God.

3. _____

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, Romans 8:3f

The law of God is part of the very nature of God. Transgression of that law brings with it a penalty.

4. _____

Leviticus 6:2-7 speaks of individual atonement for individual sin.

Leviticus 4:13-20 references national atonement for national transgression

Atonement means to cover over so that their sins are forgiven. In the Old Testament, the bull or ransom served as a substitute and must die for forgiveness to be possible.

*"Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness;
It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness,
For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. Isaiah 38:17*

*He will again have compassion on us;
He will tread our iniquities under foot.
Yes, You will cast all their sins
Into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19*

5. _____

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; Romans 3:25

and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. 1 John 2:2

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Hebrews 2:17

The word propitiation means appease. If the sin has been covered or removed, then God's wrath against that sin has been appeased or satisfied.

6. _____

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Romans 5:10

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:18

The effect of satisfaction is reconciliation. Reconciliation to God is the result of satisfaction. It works something like this. In the beginning God and man stood face to face with each other in perfect harmony. Adam turned his back to God when he sinned. Then God turned his back to Adam. Christ's death has satisfied the demand of God and now God has again turned his face toward man. It remains for man to turn around and face God. God has been reconciled by the death of His Son, now man is invited to be reconciled to God.

7. _____

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

In the Old Testament and in the days of Jesus, ransom typically referred to the purchase money for freeing slaves. Christ's death paid the ransom to God. The debt that required cancelling was due to God's attribute of justice. God's mercy ransoms man from God's justice.

Scripture teaches that we are redeemed through the death of Jesus Christ. The redemption is from:

- The penalty or curse of the law (Galatians 3:13)
- The law itself so that we are no longer under the law but under grace ((Romans 7:4; 6:14)
- Sin as a power so that we need no longer submit to the domination of sin (Romans 6:2; 12-14)
- Satan, who held men in captivity (2 Timothy 2:26)
- All evil, both physical and moral, including our present mortal body, to be fully granted at the return of Christ (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14; Luke 21:28).

Redemption can mean the payment of a debt or to the liberation of a captive. Christ's sacrifice provided man both. Praise God!

Chapter 4 - The Greatest Sacrifice

There are 5 types of offerings or sacrifices in the Bible that Israel brought the Lord:

- Burnt Offering
- Grain Offering
- Peace Offering
- Sin Offering
- Trespass Offering

Each sacrifice served a specific purpose and function. The important distinction is that the burnt, grain, and peace offerings were voluntary. The sin and trespass sacrifices were mandatory.

Each offering had specific elements such as animals, fruit or grain. These offerings were split into portions, two or three usually, with the third portion being kept by the person making the offering.

Burnt Offerings

The burnt offering is the first of the voluntary offerings, which were made to express thanks, worship, devotion, and commitment to God. But it was also an atonement for unintentional sin.

Israel sacrificed bulls, birds, either pigeons or turtledoves, or rams without blemish. Their meat and bones were burnt completely, and the hide was given to the Levites who could earn money by selling it.

Grain Offering

The second voluntary offering is the grain offering, in which the worshiper offers up the fruit of the field in the form of a cake or baked bread. The grain offering was accompanied by a drink offering of wine.

Grain and dried offerings expressed gratitude and thanksgiving, recognizing the Lord's favor, unmerited good will and provision towards the person making the sacrifice. Priests could partake of a portion of this offering, but they had to eat it within the tabernacle.

Peace Offering

The third voluntary offering was the peace offering. It involved the best and unblemished animal from the herd and various grain and bread offerings. This sacrifice expressed thanksgiving, but it also emphasized fellowship, as it was followed by a shared meal.

Unlike the burnt and grain offerings, the priest received pieces of the animal that were called the wave or heave offerings. That is because the animal pieces were lifted or waved over the altar during the ceremony. The participants were able to eat some of the offering, signifying God's provision. The vow, thanksgiving and freewill offerings mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures were all peace offerings.

Sin Offering

The sin offering was mandatory, as it atoned for sins and cleansed from defilement. There were five possible elements of the sin offering, depending on the financial situation of the person. A common person could offer a female goat. The poor could offer fine flour. Meanwhile a young bull was offered on behalf of the congregation as a whole.

Trespass Offering

The trespass offering was the second mandatory offering, and this sacrifice was specifically a ram. Israel offered trespass sacrifices as atonement for unintentional sins against someone else that required reimbursement and recompense. It was also a cleansing offering from defiling sins or physical illnesses and conditions. The fat portions, kidneys and liver were offered to God, and those offering the sacrifice ate the remainder of the ram outside in the tabernacle.

On the cross, Jesus' last words were, "It is finished." Jesus had consumed the cup of God's wrath and through his sacrifice the bridge between God and sinful man had been established. The Greek word Jesus used was *tetelestai* which in a judicial context means fully served. In the New Testament, it was used on receipts in business meaning "debt paid in full." In the military context it means "battle won." Jesus accomplished all three.

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. John 19:30

In the Old Testament days, sacrifices had to be made on an ongoing basis. The sacrifice of animals and other elements were not considered permanent sacrifices by God. Because

Jesus was God and man He could be the ultimate permanent sacrifice. Since, Christ is God incarnate, the substitute is God himself. It is not unjust for the judge to pay the penalty himself, if he chooses to do so. Jesus volunteered to be the substitute. God gave His all so we could have new life here on earth and then spend eternity with Him in heaven. Jesus is the greatest sacrifice and He is permanent.

*even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.
John 10:15, 17*

*For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.
John 10:17*

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

Chapter 5 - Our New Identity

Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation insures:

- He is in heaven and spiritually present everywhere (Ephesians 4:10)
- He has entered His priestly ministry in heaven (Hebrews 4:14)
- He has bestowed spiritual gifts on His own (Ephesians 4:8-11)
- He has poured out His spirit on His people (John 14:16)

Because He has poured out His spirit on those who accept Him as Lord and Savior, we are now:

- In Christ (Romans 6:3; 6:6; Colossians 3:3-4)
- Holy, Righteous, Perfect, Accepted, Complete (Romans 15:7, Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 5:19)
- Justified, Redeemed, Forgiven, Reconciled, have Peace with God (Ephesians 1:7-8; Romans 5:1)
- Free from condemnation (Romans 8:1; Ephesians 2:10)
- Dead to the power of sin (Romans 6:6-7; 6:11; 8:1-2)
- Friend of Jesus (John 15:13)
- Jesus is the vine and believers are the branches (John 15:5)
- Rooted in Christ (Romans 11:16; Mark 4:6)

More information can be found about our new identity in Christ in the Bible study: *Living in the Goodness of the Lord: An Answer to this Chaotic World.*

Jesus' sacrifice is unlimited in that it is available for all. It is limited in that it is effective only for those who believe. It is available for all, but efficient only for those who choose Him. Choose life today. Jesus sacrificed Himself so we could choose to be with Him forever.

Answers to the Exercises

Exercise 1:

Exercise 2: Jesus' chief purpose in coming to earth

To die for us

Exercise 3: Subject of Apostolic Preaching

Christ and Christ crucified

Exercise 4: Reasons for the Incarnation

1. To Confirm God's Promises
2. To Reveal God, the Father
3. To Become a Faithful High Priest
4. To Put Away Sin
5. To Destroy the Works of the Devil
6. To Give Us an Example of a Holy Life
7. To Prepare for the Second Coming

Exercise 5: Christ's Work on the Cross

1. It is Vicarious
2. Satisfies the justice of God
3. Satisfies the law of God
4. Is an Atonement
5. Is Propitiation
6. Is Reconciliation
7. It is a ransom

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