

"The Sacrifice"

Because of a great sacrifice given long ago, you and I have the hope of forgiveness and eternal life. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today, we're examining the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Word of God opens for us a door of love and understanding about God. The Bible helps us to see what great lengths God has gone in order to save and bless us. No one will ever love or bless you to the extent the Father and His Son Jesus loves you. No one has sacrificed so much to forgive your sins and to give you the hope of eternal life. To have Christ in our lives means everything. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

A sacrifice is an offering up of something precious to God. And throughout history, God demanded that His people give their best in their sacrifices. In ancient times, the patriarchs and the Israelites sacrificed gift-offerings, thank-offerings, peace-offerings, guilt-offerings, and sin-offerings to God. Sometimes they offered oil, wine, or grain; and at other times they offered animals. They offered sacrifices when they made a covenant with God, or when they pleaded for God's help at time of battle, and when they realized that they had sinned. The Law prescribed exactly what God expected from them, what He accepted, and what He rejected. To be pleasing, Israel offered only what God prescribed.

The Law of Moses prescribed the offering of the blood of animals for sin. The one who offered the animal would confess his sins. On the Day of Atonement the high priest would lay both hands on the scapegoat and confess the sins of the people. This was a means of transferring the guilt of these sins upon the sacrifice. We today are under a new covenant ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ who is the sacrifice for our sins. He paid an awful and a painful price for our sins. And today we want to look at His sacrifice.

Well, today we're offering this study, "Kneel At The Cross", free, this little book, to anyone who'd like to have a copy. And if you'd one or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Hebrews 7:23 to 28, and then we'll recall the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from Hebrews chapter 7 verses 23 to 28. And in this passage the Hebrew writer is contrasting the gift of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice as compared with the sacrifices under the law of Moses.

The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're so thankful that Jesus was willing to make the sacrifice of Himself for our sins. So that we might have eternal life and to be able to live with You forever. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites offered up animal sacrifices, but God had greater plan than animal sacrifices. He sent His Son to be our sacrifice. From the beginning, God had planned for His Son Jesus to redeem man and to destroy the works of the devil. But for Jesus to be a sacrifice, He must have a fleshly body. Now you'll remember that the angel of the Lord told Joseph that Mary would be with child, conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:21 says, that "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." John 1 and verse 1 speaks of Jesus and says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then verse 14 explains, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Now John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him and he said in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Yes, the New Testament clearly reveals the purpose of Jesus coming into this world was to take away the sins of the world so that we might be saved. Now this clearly, clearly requires a body for sacrifice. Hebrews 10 verses 1 to 10 explains the difference between the Israelite offerings under the Law of Moses in the Old Testament and the offering of our Lord Jesus as a part of a new covenant. It says:

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He (that is Jesus) comes into the world, He says (and this is a quotation from Psalm 40 verses 6 to 8), "Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for Me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure.

"Then I said, 'behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God.'" Now after saying above, that "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do your will." And He takes away the first, that is the first covenant, in order to establish the second. And it's by this will, that is the second covenant, that we've been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The birth of Jesus and His becoming flesh took place so that He might have a body to sacrifice for our sins. Because Jesus became human and lived a perfectly sinless life, He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus willingly sacrificed Himself when He went to the cross. Now this was a voluntary sacrifice, because of His love for you and for me. The Lord Jesus said in John 10 verses 17 to 18, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

The Lord Jesus knew what crucifixion was all about. He knew the horror and the pain of going to the cross. He knew the Romans reserved this punishment for the worst of people. The Roman Seneca, who lived from 4 BC to 65 AD, was a tutor and advisor to Emperor Nero. And in a letter to Lucilius, Seneca asked a serious question about the Roman practice of crucifying people. He asked, "Can

anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long drawn-out agony? Oh, He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross." That's Seneca's words. I tell you the Lord Jesus was willing to die just that way, to sacrifice Himself for you and me out of love.

Let's take some time to remember what Jesus went through from the time of Gethsemane until He died upon the cross. Jesus prayed at Gethsemane with His face upon the ground. Peter, James, and John were with Him but sleeping from sorrow. And His closest disciples couldn't stay awake to pray with Him. He knew what lay ahead. Hebrews 5 and verse 7 says that he prayed with "loud crying." And He prayed for the cup to pass from Him, yes; but ultimately He prayed that the Father's will be done.

Jesus saw the crowds with swords and spears coming for Him. And Judas, his own familiar friend, betrayed him with a kiss. His disciples scattered. They arrested and bound him, taking him away like a criminal.

They falsely accused him in a series of three illegal trials, but could find no sin. Well, in the end, they condemned him for blasphemy, because He admitted that He was the Son of God. Matthew 26 verses 67 to 68 says, "Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

One of his closest disciples, Peter, denied him three times just as Jesus prophesied. And during the third denial, when that took place, it was in the very presence of Jesus.

They took Jesus to Pontius Pilate who could find no reason to put him to death. And four times Pilate said that He was innocent, but the Jews would not accept that. They called out for His crucifixion. The people who earlier had praised Him as their Messiah now denied Him as their king.

Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, whose soldiers mocked Him, and treated Him with contempt, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Matthew 27:27 to 30 says, "Then the soldiers of the governor (that is Pilate) took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head."

When the Jews insisted Jesus be crucified and Barabbas be released, Pilate had Jesus scourged. They bloodied his back and shoulders and chest and may have wounded other parts of his body. Scourging was a beating that was so bad, that he would not have enough strength to fight them when they crucified Him.

They forced him to carry the very cross of his destruction through the streets to shame Him. And when He could hardly go further, they forced a stranger to help Him.

Carrying that cross up to Golgotha, in the presence of all, they stripped Him of His clothes. They took large nails and drove it through His hands and feet. They suspended Him on the nails and left Him to die. He watched the Roman soldiers gamble for His prized tunic.

And while He was on the cross in anguish, the Jews mercilessly mocked and spurned Him. They despised and rejected Him. Luke 23:35 to 37 says, "And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"

Jesus became the guilt offering, and God laid the sins of the whole world for all time upon Him. Jesus was the sinless sacrifice. You see only a sinless sacrifice of one who had a body could receive the punishment for the guilt of mankind's sins.

In agony Jesus called out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" And God had to allow a sinless sacrifice to bear the guilt and the punishment of the sins of others, so that He could redeem humanity from their sins.

The sun was darkened, the earth quaked and shook the foundations. The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. According to Josephus, that veil was 60 feet high, 30 feet wide, and four inches thick. I tell you only God could have torn that veil.

Jesus spent six long hours on the cross, trying desperately to catch His breath. And in the end the physical punishment caused his heart to fail and He perished. After He died, a Roman soldier pierced His side, and out came both blood and water (John 19 verse 34). In keeping with the prophecy, not a bone of his body was broken.

Our Lord Jesus died for our sins; He was innocent and pure. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53 verses 10 and 11 say, "But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, (God) He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities." I tell you the Righteous One bore the punishment for the guilt of our sins, so that we could enter into a right relationship with the Father. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Oh, everything He sacrificed, He sacrificed for our benefit.

The death of Jesus on the cross was personal. He gave His head to a crown of thorns, His face to spit and slaps, His shoulders and back to scourging, His side to a spear, His hands and feet to be nailed to a cross, and His body and blood for our sins.

Jesus endured the hatred and jealousy of the Jews. He endured the shame and mockery of both Jews and Gentiles. He endured the betrayal of a friend Judas, the denial of His disciple Peter, and the scattering of the other ten. He endured the despondency of His disciples at His death. And He rebuked them for not believing the testimony of the women that He was raised from the dead. Yes, His suffering was as personal as can be.

If Jesus took your salvation personally, shouldn't you? If your salvation was such a serious matter to Him that He would give up everything to save you from sin, shouldn't it be a serious matter to you? No one has ever sacrificed so much so you could be delivered from the consequences of your sins than Jesus. He bore the punishment that we deserved. As a result, He freely and graciously offers to us freedom from sin and an eternal inheritance with Him in heaven. How can anyone ignore such a great salvation? There's no such hope from any other source. If we reject the Lord Jesus, no one else can save us. Let's pray. Oh Father help us to come to love You and to love Your Son Jesus. As much as You have loved us and to give ourselves to You just as Your Son gave Himself for us. Father we love You and we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Many people don't like to hear about sin, but we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3 and verse 23). I confess I am but an old sinner saved by the grace of God. And if it were not for the blood of Jesus Christ, sacrificed upon the cross for you and me, I would have no hope of forgiveness or eternal life with Christ. Without the blood of Jesus, I could only expect to pay for my sins myself.

Hebrews 10 verses 26 to 27 says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." If we know of the cross but ignore it, we're ignoring the only hope we have of forgiveness or eternal life. Why not come to the cross in faith and embrace the love and the grace of the Lord Jesus?

Remember what your sins did to the Lord Jesus. He willingly bore the guilt and punishment for your sins, so you wouldn't have to. Don't you love Him for what He's done for you? If you love Him, place your faith and trust in Him and in what He's done for you. He sacrificed for your sins; and so you sacrifice your sins, you give them up; and you live for righteousness. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized, that is immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized into Christ and into His death, His sacrificed blood cleanses you from sin and gives you newness of life (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). When you're baptized, the Lord makes you His child (Galatians 3:26 and 7) and He adds you to His church (Acts 2:47). In Christ, you have all spiritual blessings and the hope of eternal life. So come to Jesus.

We hope that today's study about the sacrifice of Christ has stirred you to consider that the price paid for your soul. We're offering the free little booklet, "Kneel at the Cross". It's free. And if you live in the United States and want this, a copy of this booklet or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And if you get a hold of us don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please do get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we really do love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.