

## The Sacred System of Christianity 3-28-21

Numbers 18 tells the account of the selection and appointment of Aaron to the High Priesthood, and sets apart his sons as his heirs. He had been chosen before, but due to the rebellion of Korah, it was necessary to re-appoint him. In selecting Aaron, God made it clear what he was responsible to do, and what rewards were his for doing this. It is summarized by Hebrews 5:1 – his job was to offer God gifts and sacrifices for sin. This is the work of a priest, one selected by God who can uniquely offer to God these things. Today, those who are in Christ are priests of God. We serve under our High Priest, who is before God at all times.

Saints are the priests of God in Christ. Yet the priests of the Old Covenant served to teach us of the important characteristics of being priests. From them we learned that only priests can offer sacrifices for sin that petition for atonement of sin. Only priests can offer up pleasing gifts to God. Finally, only priests can appear before the tabernacle. All of these things are truer now than even in the Old Covenant.

Many mistakenly believe that the Way of Christ has no sacrifices, as compared to the way of Moses or the patriarchs. Yet this is not the case. In fact, the sacrifices of the Old Covenants existed to teach us about the true sacrifices called for in Christ.

The Story of Sacrifices began in the Garden with Adam and Eve. There the first sacrifice was made when God took the life of an animal to fashion skin coverings for the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). In that act it was established that an innocent beast might die to cover up the sins of another. Soon after we see the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, and then of Noah. We see how important sacrifices are with the story of Abraham and Isaac. Finally, there is a great deal of attention given to the system of sacrifices in Israel.

The purpose of Sacrifices were twofold. First, they were to appease the anger of God. We can see this in the sacrifice of Noah in Genesis 8:21. When he sacrificed, the aroma soothed the anger of God. The word the Bible uses to describe this is “propitiation”. Secondly, sacrifices are meant to honor and praise God. We can see this in the words of David in Psalm 50:23.

The nature of Sacrifices are also revealed in the Old Testament. First, they had to be determined by God. In other words, men could not simply choose what they wanted to give God; God needed to reveal it to them. We see this in the first sacrifice of men, that of Cain and Abel (Hebrews 11:4). A sacrifice that was not acceptable to God by His words is worthless. Secondly, we see that sacrifices cannot cost nothing; they need to be a sacrifice. David made this clear in 1 Chronicles 21:24.

In Christ, there is still a Sacrificial System. In this Way, Jesus is Himself the ultimate sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2). We are told repeatedly that Christians must offer acceptable sacrifices before God (1 Peter 2:5-9). As Christians, we are called to be living sacrifices. Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

What is it that we offer to God? Consider the sacrifice of praise to God (Hebrews 13:15). Consider the sacrifice of serving others (Philippians 4:18). Or the sacrifice of doing good (Hebrews 13:16). The point is, these are the sacrifices that God has asked for in order to praise and glorify Him.

Are you a priest of God? Only as a priest can you be confident your prayers are effective. Are you offering the right sacrifices before God? We need to be living sacrifices; we need to be making sacrifices for other, and we need to be making sacrifices to God.