

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – Understanding Sacrifice – 3-9 May 2025

Christ is the Lamb of God that was slain. John was shown in vision the assembly in God's throne room (Revelation 4 and 5). Our memory text (Revelation 5:9) refers to the song that is sung by the twenty-four elders in that assembly (Revelation 4:4). Of the twenty-four elders, it will be observed that they are clothed with white raiment, and have on their heads crowns of gold; which are both tokens of a conflict completed and a victory gained. From this we conclude that they were once participants in the Christian warfare, once trod, in common with all saints, this earthly pilgrimage, but have overcome, and for some good purpose, in advance of the great multitude of the redeemed, are wearing their victor crowns in the heavenly world. Indeed, they plainly tell us as much as this, in the song of praise which they, in connection with the four beasts, ascribe to the Lamb, in the 9th verse of the fifth chapter of Revelation: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." This song is sung before any of the events in the prophecy of the seven seals transpire; for it is sung to set forth the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, on the ground of what He had already accomplished, which was their redemption. The song expressed an absolute and finished fact in the history of those who sung it. These elders are class of redeemed humans, redeemed from this earth, by the precious blood of Christ. These are among those Paul refers to when he writes to the Ephesians thus: "Wherefore He saith, when He [Christ] ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8). And they were among those resurrected at the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ: "And the graves were opened. And many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52). Matthew records their resurrection; Paul, their ascension; and John beholds them in the throne room performing the sacred duties which they were raised up to accomplish.

Sunday: Futile Sacrifices? – Compare Isaiah 1:2-15 with Isaiah 56:6-7 and Psalm 51:17; what important lessons about sacrifice are taught here? One lesson is that God does not delight in mere sacrifices. Salvation is of God, not rooted in our worth or effort. No man could do anything to induce God to bestow salvation upon him; nor could he do anything to earn it (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is God's gift (see Romans 5:15-18; 6:23). There is no intrinsic value in any man's works. There is nothing pleasing to God in mere sacrifices. David said, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psalm 51:16). The sacrifices God accepts are not of human wealth in the form of works; but "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). The Jews imagined there was virtue in their sacrifices, but the truth is, only as the works of man are connected with what God has Himself provided have his works any value; the intrinsic value is in that which God has provided, and the value of works is but derived from connection with this. In Christ's words in Psalms, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40:6-8).

Monday: The Blood of Bulls and Goats – Read Hebrews 10:3-10; what does this teach us about the old sacrifices? The old sacrifices represented Christ; the service was typical, but the forgiveness was real, for David said: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). But there was no virtue in the blood of bulls and goats, nor in our baptism; yet they as we are commanded to fulfil. It is the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 4:25), it is not by the mere act of baptism, but by the faith, which is indicated, that we secure pardon for transgression. In case of man in the Levitical age – his sin was forgiven, not through any virtue in the blood of a goat, but by virtue of his faith in Christ's sacrifice, which he manifested by offering an animal that typified Christ.

Tuesday: The Passover Lamb – In 1 Corinthians 5:7, what lesson do we have on Christ as our Passover? The Passover lamb (Exodus 12:1-11) also represented Christ. Its blood

sprinkled upon the door posts caused the destroying angel to pass over the house. Those who offered it, especially the first time, in Egypt, did so in direct recognition of Christ, whose blood cleanses from sin, and who was delivering them from bondage. "Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). But at the Passover immediately preceding His crucifixion, Christ gave His disciples another memorial of Himself. The Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus at the last Passover that He kept with His disciples the night of His betrayal, just before He suffered on the cross, to take the place of the Passover (see Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-23; and John 13:18-30). At the Lord's Supper, we drink the fruit of the vine, and Christ said, "I am the true Vine." In the Passover, the lamb slain utterly ceased to live; but as surely as the Lamb of God was slain, He lived again. In the Lord's supper, we commemorate the fact that life is obtained through His blood, by taking the fruit of the vine, which sheds its blood for the life of men, and continue to live.

Wednesday: Jesus at the Temple – Read Haggai 2:7-9, what made the new glorious than the first? To those who mourned because the new temple seemed less glorious than the first, Christ, looking forward to the time when He Himself should enter there with words of life for His people, said, by the prophet Haggai, "I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory." "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former and in this place will I give peace." This He said referring to His personal visit in the form of humanity. "The 'Desire of all nations' had indeed come to His temple when the Man of Nazareth taught and healed in the sacred courts. In the presence of Christ, and in this only, did the second temple exceed the first in glory" EG White {GC 23.4}.

Thursday: For You Created All Things – Read Revelation 4:11; what health reform lesson do we often neglect here? We read: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The neglected lesson is the value of plant-based diet, and allowing dumb animals to live, even in this sinful world! Think what terrible sufferings have been brought upon the animals through man's disobedience to God and be sure that you do nothing to add to these groanings that go up to the ears of God; but be sorry for the sins that have made them suffer so and do all in your power to relieve them. Always be kind to all the animals that you have anything to do with and try to influence others to be the same. God did not make any of the animals to be eaten. He did not create them for our food, for He gave us "every herb bearing seed," and "every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree bearing seed" (Genesis 1:29), to be our food. He made the cattle for His own pleasure for "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created." He gave all living creatures to man to care for so that he might share in "the joy of the Lord" (Nehemiah 8:10), the pleasure that He feels in giving life and happiness. Thank God that the time is coming when God's loving purpose will be fulfilled, when all creation's groans shall cease, when in the new earth man's dominion shall be restored. Then he shall again be king over the whole earth, not to "exercise lordship" over God's creatures and make them his servants, but to be the one through whom God shall serve and give life and happiness to all His creatures in this earth, for God's pleasure.

Even in this sinful world, we should avoid meat eating, not only from a physical health viewpoint, but also a moral viewpoint. "The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul. Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God!" {MH 315.2}. "The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them" {MH 315.3}. "What man with a human heart, who has ever cared for domestic animals, could look into their eyes, so full of confidence and affection, and willingly give them over to the butcher's knife? How could he devour their flesh as a sweet morsel?" {MH 316.1}.