

# ***Christ, the Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind***

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A sacrifice, according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, primarily denotes "the act of offering"; then, objectively, "that which is offered." The act of offering as it relates to the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of mankind is two-fold: God gave his one and only son for mankind, and the son gave his life for mankind. That two divine beings should have such mercy and love challenges human comprehension. The subject of Christ, the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, is central to understanding God's grace.

## **God, Giver of His One and Only Son**

In John's gospel, the preaching of Christ began with this declaration in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Perhaps the most memorized passage in the Bible, John 3:16 reflects all of God's mercy, love, and sacrifice for those who believe in his one and only son. The requirement to believe includes all of man's confidence and trust, and not mere credence. The fullness of God's love and the fullness of man's faith go together, hand in hand.

In Eph 2:8-9, Paul combined these two aspects—God's sacrifice and man's faith—to illustrate how they work together, complementing each other: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast." Again in Rom 6:23, Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God was the giver of the gift and that gift was his one and only son. The sinful nature for man created the need for an atoning sacrifice. Rom 3:23 declares that all men are depraved, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Unto man in this sinful condition came the grace of God, who freely justified man and redeemed him by the gift of Christ Jesus: "And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Rom 3:24. Thus, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood," according to Rom 3:25. God is the presenter of Christ, the sacrifice.

## **Christ, an Offering and Sacrifice to God**

Just as God gave his one and only son, Christ gave himself for a sacrifice to God. Eph 5:1-2 teaches, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." It is important to understand that Christ sacrifice was for our sins, but to God. He came at the end of the ages to do away with sin. In Heb 9:26, overcoming sins and sacrifice go together: "Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The superiority of the sacrifice of Christ stands above the previous sacrifices of the Old Testament and set those sacrifices and the law that required them aside. Christ's sacrifice is once for all, and it is through that sacrifice that we are made holy:

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb 10:8-10

Heb 10:11-13 that the one sacrifice of Christ was for all time; and that by one sacrifice, he made perfect forever those who are being made holy: "12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

In Heb 10:17, the Hebrew writer describes those whom Christ makes perfect and holy by his one sacrifice as those whose "sins and lawless acts, I will remember no more." He concludes in verse 18, "18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."

In addition to the Hebrew's passages, John confirmed the atoning nature of Christ's sacrifice in 1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." The sacrifice not only atones for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world. In 1 John 4:10, John relates the sacrifice of the Son to God's love as the providing source, and to forgiveness of our sins as resulting from the sacrifice: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." Other major translations use the word *propitiation* in place of *atoning* in these passages. W. E. Vines explains accurately the meaning here:

#### PROPTIATION

2. *hilasmos* NT:2434, akin to *hileos* ("merciful, propitious"), signifies "an expiation, a means whereby sin is covered and remitted." It is used in the NT of Christ Himself as "the propitiation," in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His death, is the personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided. In the former passage He is described as "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." The italicized addition in the KJV, "the sins of," gives a wrong interpretation. What is indicated is that provision is made for the whole world, so that no one is, by divine predetermination, excluded from the scope of God's mercy; the efficacy of the "propitiation," however, is made actual for those who believe. In 4:10, the fact that God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," is shown to be the great expression of God's love toward man, and the reason why Christians should love one another. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

## Conclusion

Heb 10:26-31 explains clearly what will happen to us if we deliberately keep on sinning:

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The benefits of the sacrifice of Christ are available to all. But all men must believe firmly and fully in him and obey his covenant. If you have obeyed and fallen away, do not keep on deliberately sinning. Follow the teaching of John and be restored to the only Lord and Master: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9-10

## Study Questions

1. Why did God send his one and only son to die? \_\_\_\_\_
2. To whom was Jesus a sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In what way did God do away with sins? \_\_\_\_\_
4. For what group did Christ sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How does one receive the grace and mercy of God? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What did God do with the Old Covenant and the sacrifices commanded there? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is man's condition, before believing in and obeying Christ, the sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What does the word *propitiation* mean? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is man's condition when, after receiving the knowledge of truth, he deliberately keeps on sinning? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What must one do who has fallen into willful sinning? \_\_\_\_\_