

## Sacrifice without blemish

Whenever a sacrifice for sin was required in scripture, particularly the Old Testament, there were a considerable number of different animals required, depending on the sin that had been committed and the person who committed it. In each and every case there was one particular specification – it had to be a sacrifice without blemish.

In Mark chapter 2 we read of Jesus turning over the tables of the money changers and those selling various animals. Although it does not tell you why He did this (apart from the reason Jesus gave) the probability is that these people were selling the animals required for various different sacrifices at grossly inflated prices, thus hitting the people who could least afford that amount of money.

Before an animal was accepted for sacrifice it had to be examined by three officials each of which must declare that the animal is without blemish before the animal was allowed to be sacrificed. It seems that even when they were given an animal without blemish for sacrifice they claimed it did have a blemish so that they could sell the person one of their own livestock and make a huge profit on the deal.

Take a look at Luke chapter 23 verses 1 to 19 and count the number of times Herod and Pilate declare that they find no fault in Jesus. He is examined three times, each time the person doing the examining declares that they find no fault in Him, thus is the witness that Jesus was the unblemished sacrifice required by God for the atonement of sin.

Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. They began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered him and said, “It is as you say.”

So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no fault in this Man.” But they were the more fierce, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.” When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. As soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. The chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, “You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. Indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man

concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.

I will therefore chastise Him and release Him” (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). They all cried out at once, saying, “Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas”— who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.

Here we see quite literally Jesus standing in the place of a sinner and taking the punishment that the sinner so richly deserved. This basically is the gospel, but look what happens to Barabbas, he is aloud to go free, just like we shall be on the day of judgement if we have put our trust in what Jesus has done and won for us through the cross we will be found not guilty on all charges the devil would want to bring against us.

This substitution amazingly is just as effective in the law courts of today in most but not all cases, because this principle even today is still widely accepted. Let us take a look at Revelation chapter 2 and you will see how this principle continued to be worked out in the Roman courts of law. It is part of John’s letter to the church at Pergamum. We shall look at the whole letter but emphasise the end part.

“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.” When a person came before a court in Roman times he was given either a black stone (which meant they had been found guilty as charged) or a white stone (which means they have been found not guilty and can go free).

Here we see God declaring to the church at Pergamum that although they were not without their faults they were innocent in the eyes of God because they put their faith and trust in the work that Jesus had done on their behalf. If you walk in fellowship with Jesus every day you are assured of the status of righteous and not guilty before God. “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Genesis chapter 15 verse 6, the same thing can happen to you.