

The Blood Of Bulls And Goats And The Blood Of The Lamb

Every Lord's Day the church that Jesus built meets around the Table of the Lord to remember her Lord Jesus Christ. As a good preacher once reminded his audiences, she does this not because she has to but because she gets to. It is an honor, a privilege, and a blessing to assemble around this Table to commune with Him, the Lord of our salvation. Throughout the week most of us sit at various tables - at restaurants and in the kitchens and dining rooms of our homes - but only at this very special, sacred Table do we sit in the presence of the "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*"¹ Only at this table do we eat the "*loaf,*" the "*body*" of Christ, and do we drink the "*cup,*" the "*blood,*" of Christ.

Like so many things in the New Testament, this special, sacred, spiritual supper was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. There were twelve loaves on the table of showbread in the Tabernacle of Moses and later in the Temple of Solomon. Each loaf represented one of the twelve Old Testament tribes of Israel. The table was in the holy place where only the Old Testament priests were permitted to enter and it was only those priests who were permitted to eat from that table. We are told from God's holy writ, that we who are Christians are now the individual priests of God and,

corporately, are the holy "*temple*" of God in whom God resides. As New Testament priests it is we who now eat the "*loaf.*"

Under the Old Testament, among other animals that were offered at the "*brazen altar*" as sacrifices for the sins of the people, were "*bulls and goats.*" There were daily sacrifices offered at the Old Testament altar but there was one special day of the year, the Day of Atonement, when the people of God brought a special offering to remove their sins. Most of the work done on that day, as far as the ministries performed at the Tabernacle or Temple, were done by the special Levitical priesthood. But it was only the High Priest who could enter the holy of holies to sprinkle on the mercy seat of the Ark the blood of a slain bullock. This he did for his sins and the sins of his family. With the blood of a goat he would do this again for all the people.

All of this ritual was removed when the New Testament nullified the Old Testament. Now, in the dispensation in which the church lives today, it is not the "*blood of bulls and goats*" and other animals that is offered for sin; it is the blood of a Lamb - the Lamb of God for as *Hebrews 10:4* says, "*...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*" But there is an

¹ *John 1:29, 36*

important statement made in the verse preceding *Hebrews 10:4* regarding the annual sacrifice made on the Old Testament Day of Atonement that is just as true and relevant for the New Testament Christian who observes and remembers each week at the Lord's Table the sacrifice that was made for all, once and for all time, as it was for the Old Testament Jew.

Concerning the sacrificial rituals followed in the Old Testament, it is written in *Hebrews 10:4*, "...in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year." Every year the obedient Jew would bring his sacrificial animal to the altar of sacrifice at the Tabernacle or the Temple on the Day of Atonement where its blood would be offered for the sins of its owner. It was here and it was then that the Jew was reminded of his sins year after year after year. In like manner, not every year but every Lord's Day, the obedient Christian comes not to an altar of sacrifice but to the Table of his Lord to remember Him who made the ultimate sacrifice. On this Table is not "*the blood of goats and calves*"² but it is the "*cup [of] the new covenant*" purchased with His Lord's blood. This is where, on open display, the stark, visual reminder that it was for his sins, the sins of the Christian, that the blood of the Lamb given at Mount Calvary awaits the New Testament priest. And so it is only appropriate to ask, "How can a Christian, as did the Old Testament saint at the altar of sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, not think of his sins each Lord's Day at this Table of remembrance when taking the '*cup*' into his hands?"

² *Hebrews 9:13*

Apostle Paul instructed each member of the church in Corinth to "*examine*" himself when he ate the "*bread*" and drank the "*cup.*" Two-thousand years later, so must the church. How is it possible for one to "*examine*" oneself before drinking the "*cup*" and not remember his sins for which the Lamb gave His blood? Again, every year when the Old Testament Jew led his sacrifice to the altar of sacrifice it was a reminder to him of his sins that needed to be forgiven. In like manner, every time the "*cup*" is in the hand and then touches the lips of a Christian this too is a reminder to him of his own sins.

It is true that the sins of each Christian are washed away by the blood of Christ when he is immersed into the death of Christ and that they are forgiven each time the Christian confesses his sin; but his sins are ever before him, especially at the Table. After all, how can one ignore the fact that the Lamb's blood was given to forgive one's sins?

There were three crosses atop Mount Calvary. We look at the one to the right and the one to the left of the cross in the center and we see ourselves for what we once were before we were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb - transgressors of God's law. We look at the one in the center and we are reminded of the altar upon which our sacrifice was slain. This is what the writer of *Hebrews* meant in *Hebrews 13:10*. "*We have an altar*"; that "*altar*" is the cross upon which God's Lamb was sacrificed for our sins. From that altar "*those who serve[d] the tabernacle [had] no right to eat.*" The unbelieving Jew had "*no right to eat*" of the Lamb's body or to drink the Lamb's

blood - the Lamb Who was nailed to the wooden altar that had a cross-beam. And neither does any non-believer. But we Christians do. It is one of our many spiritual blessings from Christ Who sits in the heavenlies.

As the writer of *Hebrews* said, it is true that our sins and our lawless deeds are no longer remembered by our God.³ King David wrote in *Psalms 103:12*, "*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*" But, is it possible for us to forget all of our sins? Maybe some, but not all. Did David ever forget his sexual tryst with Bathsheba? I doubt it. Did Peter ever forget his denying the Lord? I doubt it. Paul wrote in *Philippians 3:13* concerning himself, "*One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind...*" But did he forget everything about his life? I think not for he wrote to young Evangelist Timothy that he had been "*formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man...*"⁴ Did he ever forget how he persecuted the church? I doubt it.

I think if we were to truly "*examine*" ourselves and meditate upon how wonderful the sacrifice of the Lamb for

our sins is - the offering of both His body and His blood - we could not help but remember *our* sins at every Lord's Table as did the Old Testament saints every time they observed the Day of Atonement. And, why shouldn't we? After all, the blood of the Lamb of God is far greater than the "*blood of bulls and goats.*"

Prayer

Father in heaven, we come to this sacred and holy Table wanting to remember the Lamb of God and the way in which He was offered for our sake on the altar of the cross on Calvary's mountain. As we partake of this supper in remembrance of Him, help us to remember that what He did and why He did it was that our sins could be forgiven. For this, we are forever grateful and will forever be in Your debt. Help us to honor Him in a way that would be pleasing and acceptable in your sight. We ask that you receive our thanks for the "*loaf*" and that you bless the "*cup*." It is in the name of the Lamb that we pray. Amen.



³ *Hebrews 8:12*

⁴ *1 Timothy 1:13*