

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Human Sacrifice?

Human Sacrifice? - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2012/8/19 18:25

I read this today from a brother who use to post here on SI, some excellent thoughts on the cross...

Human Sacrifice?

One of the reasons that modern Jews reject Christ as the Messiah has to do with the notion that Jesus was a human sacrifice. The scriptures make it abundantly clear that sacrificing your sons or daughters, whether you are sacrificing them to God, or to some false god, is and was an abominable act that God described as something He neither commanded, nor ever came into His mind.

One might balk at this point, remembering that God told Abraham to offer up his son Issac as a burnt offering. If the idea of offering up your son had never come into God's mind, how did God order Abraham to offer up Isaac?

Some would answer that question by suggesting that it is not a valid one to ask. They would say that Abraham misunderstood God, that he was confused - that God didn't actually command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but rather that God told Abraham to consecrate his son to him and that Abraham took this a bit too literally and more than a bit too far - such that God had to intervene to save Issac from the misguided zeal of Abraham.

The only people who regards such a "solution" as acceptable are the ones who are willing to replace the God of scriptures with their own, more palatable version of God. Honest seekers of truth do not reinvent God every time He does something they don't understand.

If God says that the idea of human sacrifice (as carried out by the pagans in Canaan) was not something he commanded them, nor something that even came into His mind - you can conclude that whatever God ordered Abraham to do, was not the same as what the Canaanites were doing - unless of course God was lying (an hypothesis that must be rejected).

Children were routinely by their parents in the hopes that their deaths might provoke their deity to end a drought, or grant a military victory or what have you. What greater evidence of personal devotion could a pagan believer give to his god than to offer up his own son or daughter to that God? Surely, such acts of unprecedented devotion would provoke any slumbering deity to end a drought or grant a military victory on behalf of the one whose bloody act proclaimed loudly the calibre of their god-provoking devotion?

God did not command men to prove their devotion to Him by destroying the children God had given to them. That kind of math never once found a home in God's mind. So why then did God command Abraham to offer up Isaac his son on an altar as a burnt offering (cf. After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." - Genesis 22:1-2)?

Well the text tells us - it was a test. When Issac noticed that they were going up the mountain with wood for the fire, and a knife to slay the offering, he asked Abraham where the lamb to be offered was and Abraham informed him that God would supply the lamb. Remember that Isaac was the child God had promised to Abraham - that through Isaac God would make Abraham the father of many nations. Abraham knew that in order for God to keep His promise Isaac had to live through what was coming. Some think Abraham was lying to Isaac to pacify him when Abraham said that God would provide a lamb. But I think this was rather what Abraham felt would likely happen.

The fact that Abraham bound his son, put him on the altar, arranged the wood about him, and raised his hand to plunge the knife tells us not simply that Abraham was willing to offer up his son, it tells us more specifically that Abraham believed that the death of his son would by no means impede God's promise. Abraham trusted that if he obeyed God, Isaac though slain, would certainly be raised from the dead.

When the text tells us plainly that God tested Abraham, we ought to understand that the test was not a test of Abraham's faith "in general" - but that God was specifically testing Abraham's faith in His promise to make him the father of many nations. That Abraham was thus convinced was evidenced by the fact that he knew God would certainly raise up his son

in order to keep that promise.

So if we have an image of Abraham going up there to murder his son to appease some seemingly random, and uncharacteristic request of God, then we need to readjust our thinking. Abraham was told Isaac with him to mount Moriah fully expecting to see his son perish and be resurrected. If God ordained the death of Isaac in this manner, Abraham was not going to second guess him. Abraham could not forget, as some readers of the scriptures might, that God had supernaturally allowed his ancient wife to give birth several decades after the "way of women" had departed from her. Abraham understood that Isaac's life owed itself to God and not to Abraham - whatever paternal ownership a man might blindly imagine he may claim over his own children - the miracle of Isaac's birth denied from Abraham. Isaac was the living proof of God's promise, and Abraham trusted that this promise would not, and could not, be set aside.

Well, we all know what happened, God did not allow Abraham to take Isaac's life, and clearly He never intended to. It was as a test - a test of Abraham's faith in that promise God had given, and when we look at the account, we must not think for a moment that God was suddenly okay with human sacrifice. The truth is this would not have been a sacrifice in the way we use the term, and that God did not intend to allow it to happen. It was a test, not a human sacrifice.

Which brings us back to the problem about Jesus. If God hates human sacrifice (and He does), how could this same God sacrifice His own Son!?

Well, as was the case with Abraham - whatever is meant by human sacrifice with regards to the pagan practices of ancient Canaan, cannot be applied to what Christ achieved.

First of all the physical death that Christ endured (the crucifixion) was just that - physical death. Other men have endured worse deaths. What made His death unique was that something spiritual accompanied it - Christ became sin on the cross for all those who were (and are) in Christ. God was not pouring out His wrath on an innocent man, He was pouring out His wrath upon a who had become guilty of every sin committed by every last one of God's elect. His death was no sacrifice: it was an act of divine judgment.

Theologically speaking, many use the language of the accountant to describe what took place on Calvary. We know that if I owe you ten dollars, you really don't care who pays you back, as long as the debt is settled. So we import this language into the theological picture of what took place on Calvary. The wages of our sin is death such that the moment we sin we forfeit our lives. That is our "sin debt". In our reasoning, God doesn't care who pays our debt, as long as it gets paid, and so Jesus agrees to come to earth and take our place - allowing Himself to taste death in our stead.

The problem with that picture is easily understood by way of example: John's young son is brutally murdered. The murderer is caught red handed, and sentenced to death. But just before the murderer is put to death, a relative of his offers to die in his place, and so the murderer goes free, they execute an innocent man, and justice because the penalty was death, and someone died.

We reject that as "justice" because we understand the only life that can be justly snuffed out is the guilty one - to substitute it for an innocent one and allow the guilty one to go free is not noble, or just, it is a cosmic injustice on every level.

The imagery of substitution works fine with such morally neutral notions as monetary debt, but it falls short of justice when it speaks of moral culpability. It may surprise some to know that Noah was by no means sinless, He was a righteous man by his faith, not by some perfect and meritorious conduct. How then did Noah, a man guilty of sin, escape God's wrath? He escaped God's wrath by building an ark that would carry him and his family through God's wrathful judgment of the earth.

If we inject the notion of substitution into the account of Noah, we would say that God substituted the ark itself for Noah, and poured out the punishment that Noah deserved on the ark instead of on Noah - and for some that may be a "good enough" picture. But God was not pouring out His wrath on a vessel of gopher wood. The wood was innocent, and God had no quarrel with it. No, God poured out His wrath unilaterally upon all of mankind - Noah and His family just happened to be in a vessel that was not only impervious to that wrath, it was capable of bearing them through it, and into a life on the other side of that wrath.

In a very real way, Noah and His family received the same wrath as everyone else - it just didn't kill them because they were safe in the ark. We could say the same of the first passover. The same death visited every house in Egypt, but those who were in houses that had been sealed by the blood of the lamb passed through the judgment impervious to it. E

very Israelite in Egypt that night had committed sins in their life, and were worthy of death on that account. Yet when death came to a home where the blood of the lamb was applied to the doorposts and crossbeam, it could not enter into the house to take the life of any firstborns in that home. The blood was not a substitute, it was a barrier that kept those within safe from the wrath without.

I think the imagery of substitution works nice for monetary debt, and I see it as a very "tidy" way of describing what Christ did - but I think it is a shallow and inadequate metaphor for what took place on Calvary.

It may be news to some, but God doesn't punish sins He punishes people. If my sin has been dealt with it isn't because Jesus came and took them out of me, and put them on himself. It is because Jesus took me and put me into himself. There is a big difference. When the bible says that Jesus became sin, it is describing the fact that we were united together with Christ. When Christ was on the cross, the union between Himself and all believers from all times - a union pictured by marriage where the two become one flesh - united the sins of the every believer to Christ.

When God poured out his wrath on Jesus, it was an act of judgment. It wasn't a divine switcheroo whereby God shot a bullet at innocent Jesus in order to feel bad enough to forgive people. It wasn't that God shot a bullet at innocent Jesus because someone had to die, and Jesus was willing. It wasn't that Jesus' life was so infinitely significant, that it could so use even God's wrath over our sins. It was that we made Jesus guilty, and God put Him down because that is what He deserved by way of being united to the guilty believers.

Human sacrifice? No. Justice.

You see, Jesus didn't come to earth as a substitute, He came to earth as a vessel - only He wasn't translating believers through some earthly wrath as pictured in the flood or in the passover. Jesus came to be the ark that brings believers through God's judgment.

The union of the believer to Christ meant that in order to pour His wrath out upon the believer, God had to pour it out upon Christ in whom the believer dwells. In destroying us, God destroyed Christ - for that was the nature and purpose of this union. But just as our guilt demanded God's wrath, and Christ, through this union, was made to partake of it, so also, on account of Christ's innocence, the same justice over our sins that made Christ a partaker of the wrath directed at each one of us who were in Christ, so also we become partakers of that resurrection that God's justice could not deny Christ.

This union then is greater than death, for through it our own sinful lives were extinguished, but we were given a new life - the eternal, unconquerable life of Christ that we were joined to.

So the death of Christ was not a human sacrifice it was the judgment of God against the sin of every believer in Christ. Jesus endured the wrath of God, not as an innocent bystander, but as one who willingly entered into a union with sinners for the very purpose of bringing them, by the merit of His own life, through God's wrath.

Every sin that was ever, and will ever be committed will be punished in full - even the sins of the saints. But when God poured His wrath out on all believers (who were in Christ on Calvary regardless of when they were born, lived, and died), that wrath could no more penetrate Christ than the rain could penetrate the ark or death penetrate the blood of the lamb. We who are in Christ were secure therein - we have already passed through God's wrath. Every sin we have committed, and will commit has been expiated already - not by God seeing the life of Christ as so infinitely awesome that he is willing to forgive us - but by the fact that God poured out His infinite wrath upon us in Christ who bore it all (and died on account of it) in order to carry us through it.

God is satisfied by the fact that we were fully punished in Christ. This was not a switcheroo, it was a union - we were crucified with Christ, along with Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with every genuine believer that has ever lived or will ever live. Christ brought us all through God's wrath, and while it surely happened to all of us who were in Christ, none of us have or will experience it.

Those who reject the Messiah however, will experience God's wrath - having turned their nose up at the only Ark mankind has been given by which they may pass through God's wrath unscathed.

So the next time someone tells you that Jesus can't be the Messiah because God doesn't like human sacrifices - you tell them that Jesus wasn't a human sacrifice - He was the Messiah. Not the man who offered to dress up like us in our sin,

so that God could kill Him instead of us, and somehow be at peace with pardoning the guilty and condemning the innocent - no, tell them how it really works.

Re: Human Sacrifice? - posted by Beige, on: 2012/8/19 19:55

Excellent teaching. Thank you

Re: Human Sacrifice? - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/8/21 6:51

Hi! 'InTheLight'

Ummmm, jus' to confirm that I read your Thread correctly:

Is God the same, yesterday and forever? Is God unchangeable?

I imagine that you would answer, "YES".

Is Jesus God? I mean: Is God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit three personalities in one entity?

I think you would also answer this with a, "YES!"

So, I guess what yer tryin' to tell me that the unchanging God could jus' as easily choose tell anyone living in your city to day or tomorrow to kill their child to test their faith, right? After all, not only is God unchanging, He is entirely impartial ... what's good for Abraham remains good for everyone else too.

What would you say if someone in your city told you that the unchanging God told them to be prepared to murder their kids? After answering, ask yourself why is it that you wouldn't give the same diagnostic opinion about Abraham preparing to kill Isaac?

I suggest that you conduct a Google Search for "god told parent to kill" and tell me whether the recorded incidents appear sane to you ... whether the parent be named Abraham or not ... whether it occurred in ancient times or at this very day

Oh, an' then we have to also try an' muddle through the idea that God demands sacrifice ... even a human sacrifice. Not only that, God agreed to a conspiracy to murder His son. As your story goes, God somehow took His son Jesus from out of Himself and offered Jesus to Himself as a sacrifice.

A rather convoluted ransom payment!

So it is that we have to come up with all sorts of excuses and explanations as your Thread expresses.

First, you state the irrefutable truth: "The scriptures make it abundantly clear that sacrificing your sons or daughters, whether you are sacrificing them to God, or to some false god, is and was an abominable act that God described as something He neither commanded, nor ever came into His mind".

This is good.

Ooops! Then the pestering question:

"If the idea of offering up your son had never come into God's mind, how did God order Abraham to offer up Isaac?"

Here's the routine excuse which you correctly dismissed:

"Abraham misunderstood God, that he was confused - that God didn't actually command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but rather that God told Abraham to consecrate his son to him and that Abraham took this a bit too literally and more than a bit too far - such that God had to intervene to save Isaac from the misguided zeal of Abraham".

Oh, here's the accusation to get everyone nervous:

"God ordered Abraham to do, was not the same as what the Canaanites were doing - unless of course God was lying (a hypothesis that must be rejected)".

Of course, no one should want to be found calling God a liar, so we'll jus' keep quiet an' see what the truth might be.

Here's the pestering question being asked once again:

"So why then did God command Abraham to offer up Isaac his son on an altar as a burnt offering".

Wow! Oh I see, now.

IT WAS ONLY A TEST!

I guess that I should be relieved to read that.

But, I'm not.

Why?

Because there is nothing to prevent the unchanging and impartial God from 'testing' anyone at this very hour with a similar command.

Oh, here's the lame excuse you offered for Abraham:

"Abraham trusted that if he obeyed God, Isaac though slain, would certainly be raised from the dead".

After all, you continued by saying:

"Abraham was took Isaac with him to mount Moriah fully expecting to see his son perish and be resurrected. If God ordained the death of Isaac in this manner, Abraham was not going to second guess Him".

And, here's the clincher that's supposed to excuse the entire mess:

"God did not allow Abraham to take Isaac's life, and clearly He never intended to. It was a test - a test of Abraham's faith in that promise God had given, and when we look at the account, we must not think for a moment that God was suddenly okay with human sacrifice. The truth is this would not have been a sacrifice in the way we use the term, and that God did not intend to allow it to happen. It was a test, not a human sacrifice".

And, if you thought that lame excuse for Abraham wasn't lame enough, try this one about the sacrifice of Jesus:

"If God hates human sacrifice (and He does), how could this same God sacrifice His own Son!?"

Well, as was the case with Abraham - whatever is meant by human sacrifice with regards to the pagan practices of ancient Canaan, cannot be applied to what Christ achieved.

First of all the physical death that Christ endured (the crucifixion) was just that - physical death. Other men have endured worse deaths. What made His death unique was that something spiritual accompanied it".

Oh, I see.

Jesus somehow didn't really die a 'normal' physical death. So, it wasn't really a human sacrifice.

I guess we're supposed to say it was only half-a-death 'er whatever.

Now this statement is what really put my Bible knowledge into a nonsensical spin:

"If we inject the notion of substitution into the account of Noah, we would say that God substituted the ark itself for Noah, and poured out the punishment that Noah deserved on the ark instead of on Noah".

I can't even begin to wrap my head around that one.

So, come on!, to use your own words:

"No, 'InTheLight', tell us how it really works!

I suggest you read the Pages at the Links below:

Abraham's Sacrifice

<http://www.tolovejesus.com/index.php/full-gospel-articles/abraham-s-sacrifice>

The Precious Pearl

<http://www.tolovejesus.com/index.php/full-gospel-books/parables-of-the-kingdom/chapter-8-the-precious-pearl>

Re: , on: 2012/8/21 7:25

Let's return to the text itself, and there test our ponderings. Sometimes, after an event, our memory of it can evolve into the memory of our reaction, or the reaction of others, until the event itself fades, and our reactions become the recalled reality.

22Â Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Â“ Abraham!Â” And he said, Â“Here I am.Â” 2Â He said, Â“Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.Â” 3Â So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4Â On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5Â Abraham said to his young men, Â“Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.Â” 6Â Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7Â Isaac spoke

to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." 13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

15 Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Re: do not stumble nor think Him foolish..., on: 2012/8/21 7:37

Please read the text in genesis 22 as well as this text in 1 cor...

Paradox of the Cross.

18

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19

For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the learning of the learned I will set aside."

20

Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish?

21

* For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who have faith.

22

For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,

23

but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

24

but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25

For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.