

Sacrifice Series 1:

THE FIRST SACRIFICE

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March 16, 2014

Sermon in a sentence: God will make whatever sacrifice is necessary to help us survive sin.

Scriptures: Gen. 2:15-17; Gen. 3 (*v.21); Rom. 6:23; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ez. 33:11; Luke 19:10

Gen. 2:15-17 NASB Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

The biblical foundation for our lesson today focuses on the scenario played out in the Garden of Eden, as Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit.

God's instruction against eating that particular fruit was very specific and the consequence for disobedience was also very clear. They would die.

Death is an enemy we all hate and Adam and Eve were no different than we are. Although they had not seen death up to that point, it was clearly not a desirable outcome to be pursued. Knowing God as we do, we can certainly state that He had made the consequences of sin very stark and graphic in their minds. "The wages of sin is death!" (Rom. 6:23a)

We do not know exactly what they were thinking after eating the fruit, but we do know that they immediately went into hiding from God, expecting death to visit them

that day. They did not have long to wait as God came to the garden in the “cool of the day” and called out to Adam: “Where are you”?

The ensuing conversation brought about curses on Satan and the earth and future punishments against Adam and Eve. He spoke about the pain Eve would suffer in childbirth and the struggles Adam would have in farming, but strangely, the immanence of death was postponed “Till you return to the ground”.

I am sure these statements caused confusion for Adam and Eve, (and Satan), as they all expected this to have been humanity’s last day. However, God had another plan!

Gen. 3:21 NASB The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Although the details are not provided, God’s actions are clearly evident. How was He able to make “garments of skin” for them, if not by killing one or more animals to get their hide? Thus we have the occasion of The First Sacrifice.

As we discussed a few weeks ago, one of the key concepts in understanding the word “sacrifice” is that something of value is given up in order to secure something of even greater value. Although they were sinless and innocent, the Lord sacrificed the animals and shed their blood to secure ongoing life for Adam and Eve.

This First Sacrifice gives us a great insight into God’s thinking, His value system, character, compassion, and His great love toward His greatest creation. From His action, we understand that wrongdoing never goes unpunished. The penalty for sin will always be meted out to the guilty.

However, if there is a sinless substitute to stand in for the guilty sinner, He is willing to allow for this.

The concept of a substitutionary sacrifice is not just an external accommodation that God allows in His justice system, but rather a foreshadowing of The Greatest Sacrifice known to humanity – the death, of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

Substitutionary sacrifice began in the Garden of Eden. It continued on Mount Moriah to keep Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (Gen. 22). Lambs were killed by the Israelites in Egypt to ensure the angel of death passed over their firstborn sons (Ex. 12). On the Day of Atonement, a bull was killed to atone for the sins of the High Priest, and a goat to atone for the sins of the people (Lev. 16).

Thus The First Sacrifice was the initial unfolding of God's plan for humanity to survive sin. It speaks to the lengths He will go, including the death of a substitute, to save us. It began in the garden and culminated at Calvary. It highlights His desire that none should perish, but that all should find a place of repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11), but has come to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

This is the message of The First Sacrifice.