

“1 Peter 2:4-5 – Part 5”

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BIG SANDY, Texas—At our Bible study on Wednesday night, I completed a five-part series about 1 Peter 2:4-5 before the Day of Trumpets. From time to time through the years, I had spoken about 1 Peter 2:4-5 by mainly concentrating upon three concepts mentioned there. (Those three concepts were covered in this series as Parts 3, 4 and 5. But Parts 1 and 2 included additional information added to this series.).

- Part 1 – “Christ was chosen by God to be a living stone.”
- Part 2 – “You are to be a living stone.”
- Part 3 – “You are being built up as a spiritual house.”
- Part 4 – “You are being built up as a holy priesthood.”
- Part 5 – “You are to offer spiritual sacrifices – acceptable to God.”

Spiritual sacrifices

This article will focus upon part 5—“You are to offer spiritual sacrifices – acceptable to God.”

- 1 Peter 2:5—“You . . . are being built up . . . to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

More important than offerings and sacrifices

- Mark 12:28—A scribe asked Christ: “Which is the first commandment of all?”
- Mark 12:29-31—Christ gave the instruction about loving God and loving neighbor.
- Mark 12:32-33—The scribe responded by saying that loving God and loving neighbor “is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”
- Mark 12:34—Christ confirmed the scribe’s answer.

The burnt offerings and sacrifices were not as important in the New Testament.

Brief glimpse

At that point in the study, I wanted to take a quick glimpse at the subject of Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. At that moment, I acknowledged that I am not an expert about Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. The history of the subject can be interesting and even helpful – but it is not necessary for the Christian walk. Jesus Christ is our temple, our High Priest and our sacrifice.

I gathered some information about Old Testament sacrifices from gotquestions.org and other sources. The sources said the following.

- There are five main types of sacrifices, or offerings, in the Old Testament. The first three were voluntary sacrifices and the next two were mandatory sacrifices.

Three voluntary sacrifices

- The burnt offering was described as a voluntary act of worship to express devotion or commitment to God. It was completely burned on the altar.
- The grain offering was described as a voluntary offering to express thanksgiving. The fruit of the field was offered in the form of a cake or baked bread made of grain, fine flour, oil and salt. It was accompanied by a drink offering (mentioning wine).
- The peace offering was described as a voluntary offering to express thanksgiving. An unblemished animal was selected, along with various grains and breads. The high priest was given the breast of the animal. The officiating priest was given the right foreleg. The offering was also called a “wave offering” and a “heave offering” because pieces were waved or lifted over the altar during the ceremony. Some other offerings mentioned in the Old Testament (vow offering, thanksgiving offering and freewill offering) were classified as peace offerings.

Two mandatory sacrifices

- The sin offering was described as a mandatory offering for the purpose to atone for sin and to cleanse from defilement. There were five possible elements of a sin offering.
 - A young bull was offered for the high priest.
 - A male goat was offered for a leader.
 - A female goat was offered for a common person.
 - A dove or pigeon was offered for a poor person.
 - Fine flour was offered for a very poor person.
- The trespass offering (not to be confused with the sin offering) was described as a mandatory offering when a person unintentionally violated some of the Lord’s “holy” things. (Holy things were described in various ways.) A ram was chosen. Most of the sacrificial animal was burned and offered to God. The priests were able to eat some portions (while they were in the sanctuary). A restitution was made, being described as “a full restitution and an extra 20% (one fifth) as a fine.”

Looking ahead

There are scriptures in the Old Testament that were looking ahead to the New Covenant – even as the Old Covenant was still in effect.

Following are four examples.

- 1 Samuel 15:22–Samuel asked: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”
- Psalm 51:16-17–David said: “You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it. You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, Oh God, You will not despise.”
- Hosea 6:6–Hosea quoted the Lord saying: “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

- Micah 6:6-7–Micah said: “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings? With calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, 10,000 rivers of oil?”

Mercy and not sacrifice

When the Son of God walked the earth, He quoted a saying from Hosea 6:6 on two occasions to teach an important lesson.

- Matthew 9:10-11–When Christ ate with the people, the Pharisees asked His disciples: “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”
- Matthew 9:12-13–Christ replied: “Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick [need a physician]. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ ”
- Matthew 12:7–After the Pharisees were criticizing Christ’s disciples (in verses 1-2), He defended His disciples, and part of His response was found in verse 7: “If you had known what this statement (‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’) means, you would not have condemned the innocent.”