

First Animal Sacrifices in the Bible

- An Introduction to the Sacrificial System

1. [Genesis 3:17-21](#) – God clothes Adam and Eve

- **What happened:** God made garments of *animal skin* for Adam and Eve, as a result of their sin.
 - [Gen3:17-21](#) And **unto Adam Jehovah said**, Because thou hast ... eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return... 21 And **Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them.**
 - **Meaning:** This implies the first animal death and is seen by many as a symbolic act of **atonement** and **covering for sin**. God initiates this act, possibly using it to introduce the sacrificial system to Adam and Eve, so they would earnestly look forward to Messiah's sacrifice, as He was to be the Passover Lamb, according to [1Cor5:7](#) .
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2. [Genesis 4:3-5](#) – Cain and Abel's offerings

- **What happened:**
 - "**Cain** brought of the fruit of the ground([plants](#)) an offering unto Jehovah."
 - "**Abel...** brought of the firstlings of his flock([animals](#)) and of the fat thereof."
 - "**Jehovah had respect unto Abel** and to his offering: but **unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.**"
 - I have always assumed that this was a burnt offering to Jehovah, and maybe it was, **but the Bible does not specifically say this.**
 - **Meaning:**
 - [Hebrews 11:4](#) "**It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's** offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith."
 - [1 John 3:10-13](#) So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God. 11 This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 **We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous.** 13 **So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.**
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3. [Genesis 8:20-22](#) – Noah's burnt offering after the flood

- **What happened:**
 - [Genesis 8:20-22](#) Then **Noah built an altar unto Jehovah**, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean bird, **and offered burnt-offerings** on the altar. 21 And **Jehovah was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice** and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. **I will never again destroy all living things.** 22 As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night."
- **Meaning:**

- This is the **first explicit burnt offering** in the Bible.
- **God was pleased** with the aroma **and promised never to curse the ground again**.
- It symbolizes the **gratitude and dedication** of Noah.
- It looked forward to the **atonement made possible only by Messiah's sacrifice of Himself**.

4. [Genesis 15:9-10](#) – God's covenant with Abram

- **What happened:** Jehovah instructed Abram to bring animals and cut them in half (a common covenant ritual).
- **Meaning:**
 - This is a **sacrificial covenant ceremony**, symbolizing God's **binding promise** to Abram.
 - [Genesis 15:18](#) In that day **Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land**, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates...
 - **The divided animals represent the seriousness of the covenant — a common practice in ancient Near Eastern treaties.**

5. [Genesis 22](#) – Abraham and Isaac

- **What happened:**
 - [Genesis 22:1-2](#) Some time later, **God tested Abraham's faith**. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am." 2 "**Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac**, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and **sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.**"
- **Meaning:**
 - [Hebrews 11:17-19](#) **By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac:** yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18 even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 **accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead;** from whence he did also in a figure receive him back.
 - The **substitution of the ram** for Isaac is a powerful foreshadowing of **Christ's substitutionary death** for sinners.

These early sacrifices build the foundation for the **Levitical system** in Exodus and Leviticus, and ultimately point forward to the **final sacrifice of Jesus** in the New Testament.

Why Animal Sacrifices Were Needed

"... **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;" and "... **the wages of sin is death...**" ([Romans 3:23;6:23](#))

Ever since Adam and Eve's first sin, Adam, Eve, and all the rest of us have been and are sinners. Since the law of God requires the death penalty for all sins, **someone must die. Why?** "... **It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification**{forgiveness} **possible.**"([Hebrews 9:22](#)). "For **the life of the flesh is in the blood... for it is the blood that makes an atonement**{reconciliation with God} **for the soul.**"([Leviticus 17:11](#)).

So, **does the blood of animals**, given in exchange for our death penalty, **purify us** and make forgiveness possible? No - "For **it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.**"([Hebrews 10:4](#)).

So then, **why were they required to sacrifice animals?** These sacrifices were part of a complex system involving priests, rituals, and the tabernacle (later the temple). They were given by Jehovah as a way to cleanse ceremonially. The blood of daily sin offerings was sprinkled in the temple, as a symbol of transfer of sins from the people to the temple.

Then, once every year, on "The Day of Atonement", the temple was ceremonially cleansed. The blood, symbolizing the sins of the people, was ceremonially transferred to the High Priest, symbolizing sins being put on Messiah. Then, the High Priest, ceremonially transferred those sins to the "scapegoat", which was led out to an uninhabited place and released to eventually die. This is partially documented in [Leviticus 16:5-10,20-22](#) . Literally, Messiah will lay the sins of the forgiven upon the "scapegoat" at a later time... More about this in a future Bible study...

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves..." — [Hebrews 10:1](#)

"But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." — [Hebrews 10:12](#)

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." — [Hebrews 10:14](#)

So, while **animal sacrifices temporarily "covered" sin**, they could **not remove it**. The **death of Christ** is the sacrifice that does what the blood of bulls and goats never could. **This is how "... the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."** ([Romans 6:23](#))

Here's a comparison chart that highlights the key differences between Old Testament animal sacrifices and the New Testament sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

Old Testament vs. New Testament Sacrifices

Aspect	Old Testament Sacrifices	New Testament (Christ's Sacrifice)
Purpose	Temporary atonement for sins	Eternal atonement and forgiveness of sins 10 Verses
Sacrifice Type	Animals (bulls, goats, lambs)	Jesus Christ (the sinless Son of God) 11 Verses
Frequency	Repeated often (daily, yearly)	Once for all time 6 Verses
Effectiveness	Covered sin temporarily	Removed sin permanently 7 Verses
Mediator	Human priests (Levitical)	Jesus, our High Priest 9 Verses
Location	Earthly tabernacle/temple	Heavenly tabernacle 7 Verses
Access to God	Limited (through priests)	Access only through Christ Jn14:6;1Tim2:5
Scriptural Basis	Leviticus 1-7, 16, etc.	Hebrews 9-10; John 1:29; Romans 5:9
Symbolism	Shadow of things to come	Fulfillment of God's redemptive plan 12 Verses

In summary:

- The **Old Testament system** pointed forward to something greater.
- The **New Testament** reveals that **Jesus is the fulfillment** of those shadows and types. "For even **Messiah, our passover, is sacrificed for us.**"([1 Corinthians 5:7](#))

Passover Timeline for Jesus => <http://sidnash.org/docs/PassoverTimeline.html>

Desiring to live by every word that comes from the mouth of Jehovah ([Deut8:3; Matt4:4](#))

-[Sid Nash](#): 05/10/2025. Latest version: <http://sidnash.org/docs/1stAnimalSacrifices.html>