

Year Of The OX

In the Bible, the ox is known for its strength, its usefulness on the farm, and its value as property. Together with the sheep, the goat, the pigeon, and the dove, it was used as sacrifice in the burnt offering to God.¹ This ancient system of worship was instituted by God when the first pair of human beings — Adam and Eve — sinned against Him.² As it passed down the human race, the sacrifice became distorted. Many cultures in the world practise the offering of animal sacrifices to appease the spirits or deities, and fail to worship the one, true, God in the right way.³

What did the original burnt offering indicate? First, it showed that we have sinned

against God and, therefore, need a way to pay for our sins.⁴ We sin in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We have failed to do what God requires from us — e.g. to act justly, to show mercy, to worship the true God alone, etc. We have also failed to avoid what God forbids us to do, e.g. not to lie, not to hate, not to steal, not to worship idols, etc. These sinful actions flow from a sinful nature which we have inherited from our parents. We have the twin problems of a sinful nature which we cannot change, and the debt of sins which we cannot pay.

Second, the burnt offering showed that only a perfect sacrifice could make up for our sins. The animal had to be a male that was without blemish.⁵ It was killed and the blood was sprinkled on the altar while the body was burnt to God. This pointed to the coming of the Son of God who took for Himself sinless human nature. He is Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”.⁶ When Jesus Christ

died on the cross, His blood was shed for the cleansing of our sin. His life was laid down as the perfect payment of our sins.

The ox is still the measure of prosperity in some agrarian communities. In the cities, people seek prosperity through betting on a bullish market. Others pursue prosperity in other ways while neglecting the welfare of their souls. Are you one of those? “What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”⁷ Seek peace with God today, through faith in Jesus Christ!

1 Lev. 1:2, 14, 15; 2 Gen. 3:21; 4:3-4; 3 Acts 17:26-27; 4 Rom. 1:18-23; 5 Lev. 22:18-20; 6 John 1:29; 7 Matt.16:26

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