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Tabernacle (Exodus 25:8 & 9; Exodus chapters 26, 27 and 35 through 38) and later, the temple (I Chronicles 28:11-19; II Chronicles chapters 3 and 4; I Kings chapter 6) was evidence of a God who wanted obedience to the *smallest* detail.

For many, many years, animal sacrifices continued to be the method that God commanded be used for atonement for sin (Exodus 38:1-7; II Chronicles 8:12-13). It was always the best of the flock offered in a *specific* way (Leviticus chapters 1 and 6:8-13), by *specific* people (Numbers 1:47-54), consecrated to God in a *specific* way (Exodus 29) and even dressed in a *specific* way (Exodus 28). Sacrifice for the atonement of sin *always* involved the shedding of blood. Although there was a provision made for those who could not afford an animal to sacrifice (Leviticus 5:11-13), there was a “Day of Atonement” on which the priest offered a sacrifice for the sins of the *whole* community (Leviticus 16). We see the importance of blood also clearly indicated in the New Testament.

“...all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:22 NASV)

God’s people were still continuing to offer animal sacrifices to God even at the time that Jesus came onto the scene. The practice however had become so commercialized that it had been turned into a profit making venture. Entrepreneurs had set up shop inside the Temple and were selling cattle, sheep and doves for sacrifices. Their activities in these sacred areas of the temple so upset Jesus that he became angry and overturned the tables. (John 2:12-16).

As we read the many accounts of how blood and animal sacrifices are interwoven through time up until the death of Jesus, it becomes apparent that God was making a point to those who *did* and those who *would* believe in Him. It seems that those two points are:

- 1) He is a God who had a plan for mankind that involved the shedding of blood.
- 2) He expects His followers to be obedient regardless of whether or not His commands seem to make sense to *them* at the time.

So what does all of this mean to us today? Well, we’re going to address that question in the next issue. And since that discussion will be building on what has been discussed in *this* issue, either save this one or be prepared to go online and review it before reading issue 19. We think you may find it to be very interesting.

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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Power in The Blood

Very early in the opening pages of the Scriptures we see that sacrificial offerings (usually involving blood) were made to God. The very earliest examples we have recorded for us are the offerings made by Cain and Abel.

“So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.” (Genesis 4:3-5 NASV)

If we continue reading through verse 8 of this passage we learn that Cain became angry and killed Abel out of jealousy and rage because the Lord did not accept his offering. Then in verses 10 and 11 we read:

“(God) said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. (NIV)

Just a few chapters later we see that Noah also offered an animal sacrifice when he departed from the Ark.

“Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. (Genesis 8:20 NIV)

God then made a covenant with Noah and gave Noah some very specific instructions that involved ‘blood.’

“Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. ⁴Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:3, 4 and 6 NASV)

It is evident from very early in the Scriptures that “blood” has great significance to God. The significance of blood is also evident in *our* everyday lives. We frequently see articles or hear announcements soliciting blood for various shortages that exist. Infections such as AIDS, initially became focal points in our

society not only because of its fatal consequences but also its ability to be transmitted through blood transfusions. Blood is of such importance to humans that many people maintain their own personal blood bank just in case they might have an emergency need for blood. Almost from the beginning of time, blood has been a focal point of the human experience.

In the Scriptures, we see the significance of blood evidenced in a different form in the account of Moses dealing with Pharaoh. In an attempt to get Pharaoh to release the children of Israel out of Egypt, God sent plague after plague upon the people. Each time however, Pharaoh either refused to release them or recanted on his promise. The plagues intensified until we read about the death of the first born males. Each and every first born male (including the livestock) was to die (Exodus 11:4-5). We see however that God gave the Israelites *very specific* instructions to follow (involving blood) that would protect *them* when the Lord passed through the land causing the death of the firstborns. Let's read Exodus 12:3-13

"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste — it is the Lord's Passover. For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments — I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (NASV)"

So we see that those houses that had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts were protected from the death of *their* firstborn, while those houses that *did not* have the

blood on their door frames were *not* protected and all of their firstborn males died. The use of the blood of the lamb in this manner was a precursor of what was to come.

Moses followed a very strict ritual involving the blood from animal sacrifices at the time of Israel's acceptance of the covenant that the Lord gave to Moses. We see that acceptance of that covenant not only involved blood from the animals sacrificed but also an understanding that obedience to God's commands was absolutely necessary in order to serve Him in a pleasing manner.

"And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar: And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said: behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." (Exodus 24:6-8 KJV)

Not only were animal sacrifices a significant part of the Old Testament accounts, but also there were extremely specific rules given concerning how the sacrifices were to be offered. God made it *very clear* to His people that He demanded strict obedience to all of the regulations and rituals that He laid out for them — whether it concerned sacrifices offered to Him or any other matter. Failure to follow the design ordered by God was often deadly to some. The deaths of Nadab and Abihu came about due to an attempt to deviate from following *exactly* what they had been told to do. They attempted to use "unauthorized" (NIV) or "strange" (KJV) fire in worship to God.

"¹Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to His command. ²So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. ³Moses then said to Aaron, 'This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored....¹⁰You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean," (Leviticus 10:1-3 and 10 NIV)

You may also read of another example of God's demand of strick adherence in II Samuel 6:3-6. In that passage we read that Uzzah reached to steady the Ark of the Covenant when the oxen carrying it stumbled. For this "...irreverent act..." (NIV) God struck him dead instantly.

God's instructions to His people have always been very specific — whether it was concerning sacrifices, building of the ark by Noah, using authorized fire, not touching certain items or anything else. He demanded that His commands be followed "to the letter" Even the elaborate detail that was involved in the