

(Gen 21:33) at Beersheba whereas Isaac built an altar there for the same purpose (Gen 26:25). No altar was involved in Israel's offering of the passover lamb on the eve of their Exodus. In the Mosaic revelation the altar in the Tabernacle court was uniquely significant as the place where offerings were made and where worshippers met God in worship.

(4) The significance of blood in offering a sacrifice is first mentioned in the divine instructions for the Israelites to bring the passover sacrifice. For the Israelites the simple truth is communicated and realized in their experience that blood, at the expense of the life of an animal provided as substitute for the salvation of the households where the blood was applied. After this experience of protection through the blood of the animal sacrifice the significance of the blood is vividly delineated at Mount Sinai. There blood is sprinkled on the people and on the altar as the Israelites responded to God in the covenant (Exod 24). The sprinkling of blood on the altar as they brought their sacrifices and on the ark of the covenant on the day of atonement was vitally important as the Israelites came to meet with and worship God. (cf. Lev 1-10 and 16).

(5) Substitution in sacrifice was realistically portrayed when Abraham was divinely prevented from offering Isaac. God's acceptance of a substitute ram plainly indicated that God was not pleased with human sacrifice. In the passover observance the Israelites were realistically made aware of substitution in that the blood of the slain animal provided protection for them when the firstborn among the Egyptians were slain under divine judgment. The reality of substitution was further elaborated in the sacrificial system and ultimately in the substitution of God's only son as the sacrifice for the human race.

(6) Offerings and sacrifices were brought in the context of faith. They were important in maintaining divine-human relationships rather than in initially establishing them. Faith as basic in the relationship between godfearing people and God is uniquely delineated in Heb 11:1-29. The passover sacrifice was important for the Israelites in maintaining their relationship with God in the context of their faith and belief in God (Exod 4:31; 12:27; 14:31).

(7) In sacrifice God expected man to bring his best in maintaining a vital relationship with God. Abel brought the best he had and his offering was accepted. Abraham's relationship with God was tested when he was asked to sacrifice his only son whom he loved above all else in this world. In Israel's first passover observance God explicitly communicated to them that he expected them to consecrate their firstborn to God. At Sinai the first commandment to the Israelites was that they must worship God exclusively. Moses later expressed this in admonishing the Israelites to love God in wholehearted exclusive devotion (Deut 6:4). Jesus concurred with this (Matt 22:34-40), and taught that in a relationship with him all other relationships must be secondary, (Matt 10:37-39 and Mark 10:17-22).

NOTES

^{^1} CF. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) p1:111.