

# THE POWER OF BLOOD: HUMAN BLOODSHED UNLEASHES POWER FOR GOOD OR EVIL

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***Sacrificial bloodshed unleashes power for good or evil. Its unlimited power for good is unleashed through God-ordained means of atonement for sin, for “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22). Thus it has the power to restore people in right relationship with God. Yet human sacrifice to idols and demons increases the power of evil and unleashes it in that person and community (II Kings 3:26-27).***

From the beginning, *animal* blood was shed for the good purpose of covering the sin of mankind. Immediately after the first sin, “The LORD God made garments of skin (hide of animals) for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). When their son Abel became a grown man, he knew to bring a sacrificial offering “of the firstlings of his flock ... And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering” (4:4). When Noah and his family left the ark and stepped onto dry land after a year on the water, their first act was to build “an altar to the LORD,” and sacrifice one of “every clean animal and ... bird.” This righteous act impacted God, and He made a promise that He has kept, witnessed by every rainbow:

“The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing ... I establish My covenant with you ... I set My bow in the cloud’” (Genesis 8:21; 9:11-13).

In the generations after the Great Flood, people in cultures who no longer knew the Living God somehow knew the importance of blood sacrifice. But after they created their own gods, they eventually sacrificed *humans instead of animals*. In the nations utterly destroyed by ancient Israel, the practice of human sacrifice likely went on for more than 400 years. Why did the LORD command that they be “utterly destroyed” – in some cases every man, woman, child, and animal (Deuteronomy 7:1-10; 12:2-4, 29-31; 20:16-18)? Because ***the “abomination” of child sacrifice unleashed the power of evil***, with evil eventually permeating every person and creature in their cultures.

Human sacrifice to appease gods was practiced in civilizations in other regions of the world. The Maya Empire in Central America built sacred cities and temples as places for worship and human sacrifice to their gods. For the Aztec Empire in Mexico, “Human sacrifice was the chief means of propitiating the gods.” On one occasion, the kings and priests dedicated a “great temple-pyramid ... by the sacrifice of twenty thousand prisoners of war ... ripping out the throbbing hearts, throwing them into the ... flames.”<sup>1</sup> I do not know the history of this region well enough to understand all the evil that was unleashed from countless human blood sacrifices. But these civilizations, which for a time were highly advanced cultures, were destroyed and the sacrifices ended. Ever since then, there seems to have been an oppressive darkness over that region. When I climbed pyramid-temples in one area, there was an unmistakable sense of the presence of evil.

Back to the time of ancient Israel. The LORD restored the right practice of *animal* sacrifices for atonement by giving instructions to Moses which are recorded in the book of Leviticus (1:4; 4:1-35; 6:1-7; 16:1-34), and the reason for blood sacrifice:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement” (Leviticus 17:11).

The LORD’s design of animal sacrifice was to provide temporary atonement for sin, and point to the future sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who would provide permanent atonement for sin. Here is the connection between the old and new pattern, the old and new covenant.

But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ... Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. ... And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. ... For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:11-26).

One sacrifice for all time! ***When Jesus Christ “poured out” His blood “for the forgiveness of sins” on the cross, He covered all sin for all time, and overcame the power of sin, evil, Satan, and death*** (Matthew 26:28). Thus, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). ***His forgiveness is available to every person, ruler, or nation, including for human sacrifice and abortion; and it is He who can lift and remove the power of darkness and evil.***

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<sup>1</sup> A History of Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present, by Hubert Herring (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 37-45.