

## What was the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices?

**Question:** Did the Old Testament sacrifices cleanse them from sin? If not, why did they have to make sacrifices?

**Answer:** No, the Old Testament sacrifices didn't cleanse from sin. Hebrews 10:4 says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Why then, did God have people living in the Old Testament to sacrifice animals for centuries?

It was to teach them that something had to die because they sinned. In the Old Testament, the killing of the animal was meant to be an object lesson to teach them that a person (the Messiah) would one day come and die for their sins. If they hadn't been sacrificing those animals for centuries, they never would have understood why Jesus had to shed His blood.

The blood sacrifices worked like a credit card where they "charged" their sins by faith on the Messiah's account. Let's say my wife goes to the store and buys a dress by charging it to our credit card. She can enjoy wearing the dress before the bill has been paid because it has been charged to our account. The credit card is a promise to pay for the dress at a future time.

In the Old Testament, the people used the animals as VISA credit cards (**Very Important Sacrifice of Animals**) to charge their sins. They took their VISA cards to the temple where the store clerks (the priests) sacrificed the animals on the altar, and by faith their sins were charged to the future Messiah's account. The people offered the sacrifices by faith, believing that at a future time the Son of God would come to pay the bill. They could enjoy the benefits of forgiveness before the bill had been paid.

When Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist pointed to Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." When Jesus died on the cross, He paid for the sins of the world with His blood. Just before He died, He cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). The Greek word for "It is finished" is *tetelestai*, which is an accounting word that means "paid in full." In those days when a tax bill was paid in full, the word *tetelestai* was written across the amount owed. Jesus paid for all the sins of the world, which were placed on His account.

The people living before Christ were under the Old Covenant and their sins were put a credit card. But now that Jesus has died, those who place their faith in Him are under the New Covenant, which works like a debit card. Your sins are immediately covered by the blood of Jesus and forgiven.