

### Micah 6:6-8, Hebrews chapter 9 & Romans 12:1-2

I heard of many types of spiritual sacrifices and offerings before. For example, sexual act as sacrifice has been known in Old Testament for false god. It is still practiced today in some cults. Burn paper money for ancestors or spirits is a common offering practice in some Asian countries. These practices are ridiculous. But what are the major sacrifices in Christian practice? Micah chapter 6, Hebrews chapter 9 and Romans chapter 12 give the answers.

Book of Micah is a minor prophet book in the Old Testament. Micah wrote it around the time right before the Northern Kingdom's fall in 722 B.C. The purpose of the book was to proclaim warning and judgment to both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms for their corrupt leadership, idolatry and social evils. His message was similar to that of Isaiah time period. The first five chapters are mainly about judgment. Chapter 5:2 has prophesied Jesus's birth. The last two chapters are about what God requires of His people and about God's mercy. As a note, Micah's message of sin, repentance and restoration directed its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

#### 1) An Old Testament sacrifice - burnt offering with animal

##### a. Atonement is the purpose

Micah 6:6-8 is an important lesson on sacrifice. One of the major sacrifice practices in the Old Testament period is burnt offering. The animals offered in burnt offering as stated in Micah 6:6-7 should be in the highest quality and purity. The sinful nature of human separated them from the holy God. The purpose of burnt offering was to make atonement (cover) for the sin of the worshiper, and thus be able to gain temporary God's acceptance. Death of animal's life with shedding of blood was to cover the sins before God in that period.

##### b. Not acceptable sacrifices

Israelites in the time of Micah's prophecy were sinful such as not righteous and greedy. But they often gave burnt offerings as a ritual. Here, Micah 6:6-7 described offerings with one-year old calves, thousands of rams, 10000s river of olive oil and firstborn son. First born son to be used as a sacrifice!

Not a single person can have that much top-quality offerings. However, God was not pleased even with that. The reason is that they didn't have the right heart and action behind the act of sacrifice.

## **2) The once-for-all sacrifice**

### **a. Jesus is the one without sin**

Only one without sin can take the punishment for human's sin forever. That is Jesus (II Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, I John 3:5). Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29 & 1:36). Jesus death was a sacrifice not done on earthly temple but in heaven. His death and resurrection wiped us clean in order for us to have communion with God and have eternal life when we accept Him as Savior.

### **b. No longer need burnt offering**

Heb. 9:23-28 clearly stated that Christ was sacrificed once to take away sins of us. We no longer need high priest to enter the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own for repeated sacrifices. Jesus Christ's death and resurrection are a "once for all" action for eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12). Thus, there is no longer any need for burnt offering.

## **3) The living sacrifice**

As stated in Micah 6:6-8 that the true desire of God behind burnt offering is that the Israelites be righteous, holy, faithful and obedience to God. The same desire of God holds true after Jesus' death and resurrection. We no longer need to burn animals as a ritual. It is God's grace for our redemptions, and it is our response to God's love to obey and worship Him. It is a living sacrifice that shall be the response as stated in Romans 12:1. The object of this sacrifice is yourself and no longer animals. Your living sacrifice should be pure in your heart and holy in your action with obedience to God that pleases Him. We shall not be conformed to the pattern of this world (Rom. 12:2). Examples of worldly actions are unjust to people around you by taking advantages of them and no mercy towards the poor and weak similar to those in Micah's period. Micah 6:8 stated "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Living sacrifice includes those attitudes and actions.

In conclusion, the need for sacrifice is that we are sinful in nature but God is righteous. Sacrifice covers our sinful nature in the Old Testament. With Jesus' death

and resurrection, we are forever redeemed when we accept Jesus as our savior and thus no longer needs burnt sacrifice. However, God's desire is always the same that is we should be righteous, merciful, holy and faithful in our hearts and actions. In another words, when we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice the above will be evidenced in our humble walk with God.