

# Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints  
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages  
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## Correlating the Spring and Fall Burnt Offerings

The feasts of Israel were special observances designed to help Israel recall the many blessings and providences of God. They were observed in both the spring and fall of the year. Before addressing the feasts of Israel it may be helpful to examine the basic meaning of burnt offerings.

### THE PEOPLE'S BURNT OFFERINGS

As described in Leviticus 1, any Israelite was free to bring a personal offering as an expression of gratitude. The individual would lay his hands on the animal's head and kill it beside the altar. He would then flay it and wash the inwards and legs. After this the priests would sprinkle the blood around the altar and lay the animal parts on the altar. The priests cared for the legal aspects of dealing with the blood and the altar while the individual provided the sacrifice. This active participation of the individual with the priest foreshadows the wonderful cooperation between mankind and the antitypical priesthood.

The various types of animals offered, from bulls to fowl, represent different levels of ability and appreciation. The offering of a bull suggests a full, unreserved consecration, while the lesser animals depict simple offerings of thanksgiving. In each case, the antitypical priesthood will be required to guide people in making an acceptable offering. These offerings are described as "a sweet savor unto the Lord" (Leviticus 1:17).

### THE FEAST OF PASSOVER

The week-long Feast of Passover was the spring feast instituted as a remembrance of Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 13:3, 4). The people were instructed to eat unleavened bread during the feast. In addition, the following animals were offered on each day of the week: 2 bullocks, 1 ram and 7 lambs, a total of seventy animals (Numbers 28:19, 22). These were each designated as burnt offerings and were described as a "sweet savor unto the Lord." One goat was also offered each day as a sin offering.

The symbolism of eating unleavened bread is explained by the Apostle Paul, who wrote "Purge out therefore

the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8). The church has thus been feasting on the unleavened bread of truth during the Gospel Age. This has had a purifying effect in the heart of each saint.

The burnt offerings presented during the Feast of Passover represent the church's free-will expressions of gratitude and praise for the sacrifice of Jesus. This acknowledgement has led each saint to a full consecration offered on the altar of sacrifice. Burnt offerings then connect heart-felt gratitude with willing sacrifices.

### THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Held in the fall of the year, the Feast of Tabernacles was also observed for seven days. It was instituted to remember Israel's dwelling in booths, or tabernacles, while wandering in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42, 43). It was also referred to as the Feast of Harvest and was designated as a season of offering thanks for the large fall ingathering (Exodus 23:16).

The unusual feature associated with this feast was in regard to the burnt offerings. Each day of the feast the number of bulls being offered diminished by one. On the first day 13 bulls were offered, on the second day 12 were offered, the third 11, and so on until, on the seventh day only 7 bulls were presented. The number of bulls sacrificed during the week totaled seventy. In addition to the offering of bulls, 14 lambs and 2 rams were sacrificed each day. The

### IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Spring and Fall Burnt Offerings</i> . . . . .	1
<i>Did Jesus Have Siblings?</i> . . . . .	2
<i>Animals that Represent Jesus</i> . . . . .	4

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additional animals (112 rams and lambs) brings the total number of burnt offerings to 182. In addition to these, one goat was offered each day for a sin-offering. (See Numbers 29:12-34.)

Zechariah 14:9, 16 indicates that the Feast of Tabernacles will be observed in the earthly phase of God's Kingdom. The many burnt offerings associated with this feast then may point to the free-will offerings of mankind. For seven days every Israelite was instructed to live in tents, or booths as a reminder of their nation's forty year journey through the wilderness of Sinai (Leviticus 23:42, 43). It represents mankind's remembrance of its deliverance from this "present evil world." The pain and suffering experienced during its own wilderness ordeal will be a vital memory for the human family. Reflecting upon their journey through sin and death will cause deep gratitude to well up in every reasoning heart.

After entering the Promised Land the Feast of Tabernacles was "marked out by the Lord" to also celebrate the large fall harvest (Deuteronomy 16:15). How well this illustrates the large harvesting of mankind and highlights the abundant kingdom blessings.

## SEVENTY NATIONS

Frederic Ferrar writes, "During the week of festivities all the courses of the priests were employed in turn; seventy bullocks were offered in sacrifice for the seventy nations of the world; the Law was read daily, and on each day the Temple trumpets sounded twenty-one times, an inspiring and triumphant blast."<sup>1</sup>

Suggesting that the seventy bulls offered during the Feast of Tabernacles represent the nations of the world appears to be scripturally supported. In Genesis 10, the seventy descendants of Noah are listed as the progenitors of the seventy nations that "divided the earth after the flood" (Genesis 10:32). The seventy bulls offered during the Feast of Tabernacles indicate that the nations of the world will be part of the kingdom arrangement. They will offer themselves in consecration to God on the altar that will have already been cleansed by the previous Atonement Day sacrifices.

As described earlier, the burnt offering of a bull represents consecration. However, the diminishing number of bulls does not illustrate less devotion but may point to fewer new consecrations made as the age progresses.

In addition to the seventy bulls offered during the Feast of Tabernacles, 112 additional burnt offerings were sacrificed, bringing the total burnt offerings to 182. In addition, there was one goat offered on each day of the feast as a sin-offering. The total number of animals offered during the week then came to 189.

Since the Feast of Tabernacles is directly associated with the Kingdom, the presentation of so many burnt offerings may correspond to the various nations of the world presenting themselves to God. Although the number



*Preparing for the Feast of Tabernacles*

of nations has varied considerably over the years,<sup>2</sup> the total of 182 burnt offerings may indicate the final number of nations that will comprise the earthly kingdom at the close of the Millennium.

In addition to the burnt offerings, one sin-offering goat was sacrificed on each day of the feast. This may suggest that the world will come to recognize the church's share in the sin-offering, pictured by the Lord's goat on the Day of Atonement (see Hebrews 13:13). The number of goats may point to the fact that the church was developed during the seven periods of the previous age.

## CORRELATING THE SEVENTY BURNT OFFERINGS

During the Feast of Tabernacles the number seventy pointed to the nations of the world. The number seventy also appeared during the Feast of Passover. It was the total number of burnt offerings sacrificed during the week. This suggests that the willing sacrifices of the Gospel Age will also be for the benefit of the nations. In both feasts, seven sin-offering goats were sacrificed, pointing to the church's role in the antitypical work of atonement.

## BESIDE THE CONTINUAL BURNT OFFERING

"Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even" (Exodus 29:38, 39). These were the first and last offerings of each day and together termed the "continual burnt offering" (verse 42). The first lamb was placed on the altar at around 9:00 AM.<sup>3</sup> The last offering was "at even." The correct reading is "between the two evenings," meaning at twilight.<sup>4</sup> These times correspond to the hours Jesus hung on the cross (see Mark 15:25, 34). Like the two lambs of the daily offering, Jesus' willing sacrifice was "a sweet savor unto the Lord" (Exodus 29:41).

During both the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, the burnt offerings were to follow the morning burnt offering (Numbers 28:23). This indicates

that the willing sacrifices of both ages are acceptable because Jesus first sanctified the altar (Leviticus 8:15) and prepared the way for all future consecrations to be acceptable God.

Identifying the symbolism in the number of burnt offerings involves some speculation. However, the underlying lesson illustrates that during the kingdom the world will recognize the offerings that went before and, from a deep sense of gratitude, dedicate themselves to God. It is a glorious prospect that should thrill the heart!

— Br. Tom Ruggirello

(1) Ferrar, Frederic W., *Life of Christ* (1874, reprinted by Fountain Publications, Portland, Oregon 1980) pages 396-397.

(2) The number of nations has dramatically increased over the last 100 years, from approximately 58 in 1874 to 197 today (from ourworldindata.org).

(3) The exact time of the morning sacrifice cannot be determined. The Mishna indicates that it was to be offered as soon as it became light (Mishna, Tamid iii, 2)

(4) Josephus designates this as the ninth hour, i.e. 3:00 PM (*Antiquities*, xiv, 4, 3)

## *Did Jesus have Brothers and Sisters (Siblings)?*

The Roman Catholic church claims that Jesus was an only child and that those described as his “brethren” were cousins rather than siblings.

These brethren are mentioned numerous times in scripture. Matthew 12:46, “While he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him.”

Luke 8:19, 20, “And there came to him his mother and brethren, and they could not come at him for the crowd. And it was told him, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.”

Mark 3:31, 32, “And there come his mother and his brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him. And a multitude was sitting about him; and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.”

The Bible provides the names of these brethren. They were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. Matthew 13:55, 56, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?” In addition to four brothers, this text suggests that Jesus also had at least two sisters. However, his sisters are not named.

Matthew states that Joseph “knew her [Mary] not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:25). This suggests that

after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had a normal conjugal relationship. Being the “firstborn son” of Mary also implies that she bore other children. It is the clear teaching of scripture that Jesus had half-brothers and half-sisters who were the children of Joseph and Mary.

### **AFTER JESUS’ DEATH**

Jesus’ siblings continued to be mentioned even after our Lord’s death. In Acts 1:14, his brothers and mother are described as praying with the disciples. “These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” In Galatians 1:19 the Apostle Paul mentions that James was Jesus’ brother. “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.”

The natural conclusion we reach from these passages is that Jesus had half-siblings related by blood. In each instance, the specific Greek word for “brother” is used. While the word can refer to other relatives, or even spiritual brethren (Acts 6:3), its normal and literal meaning is to a brother related by blood. There is a Greek word for “cousin,” but it was not used when referring to Jesus’ immediate family (Luke 1:36, 58). Further, if they were simply cousins, why would they be mentioned so often in company with Jesus’ mother, Mary? When his mother and brethren came to see him there is nothing in the context suggesting they were anything other than his half-brothers.

### **A CATHOLIC BELIEF**

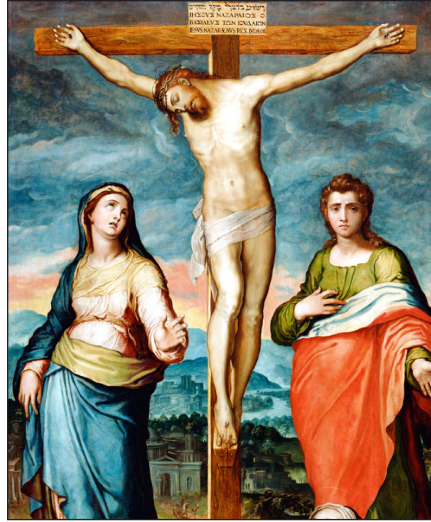
One argument presented is that Joseph was significantly older than Mary and that Jesus’ brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph from a previous marriage. Then, after being widowed, Joseph took Mary as his new wife. However, this conclusion again has no biblical basis or is even hinted at in scripture. If Joseph had six previous children, why are they not mentioned when he and Mary traveled to Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7), or when they journeyed to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15), or even during their return to Nazareth (Matthew 2:20-23)?



*Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fleeing from Bethlehem*



The idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary appears as early as the second century. The Catholic church and others have held to this view assuming she is a symbol of the church, the virgin bride of Christ. Consequently, she is considered the mother of all Christians. The argument is based on the words of our Lord while on the cross. There he gave the care of his mother to John, saying “behold thy mother” (John 19:27). It is believed that this prefigured Mary’s relationship as the mother of Christians. This, they conclude, would make no sense if Mary had other children. Unfortunately, this confuses the real basis of a Christian’s relationship with God.



*Mary's care was given to John.*

### OUR TRUE MOTHER

In Galatians the fourth chapter the Apostle Paul teaches that our relationship with God is based on the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic Covenant. He compares Sarah, a free woman, to Hagar, a bondswoman (Galatians 4:23, 26). Paul describes these wives as “an allegory.” He states that Hagar represents the Law Covenant. Israel was in bondage to the Law. It was a covenant that could not give life because it could not provide a true atoning sacrifice. The sacrifices under the Law were merely typical of the greater ones to come. Therefore, the Law was unable to actually take away sin.

However, the Sarah feature of the covenant could bring life. In Hebrews 9:23 the apostle teaches that the heavenly salvation was made possible because of the better atoning sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, Paul could state in Galatians that the Sarah Covenant is our true

mother because Jesus presented his perfect life as a corresponding price for Adam and, consequently, for his race. This better arrangement then is able to bring forth eternal life.

How rich and meaningful then is this understanding of our covenant mother? Mary is not our mother. She too was a sinner along with all the children of Adam.

### CONCLUSION

There is no biblical reason to believe that Jesus’ siblings are anything other than the actual children of Joseph and Mary. This should not be surprising as it provided one additional human

experience for our Lord, that of family and siblings. As the eldest brother it may have also provided some personal instruction for when Jesus became the shepherd of his first followers. In many ways, he was like their older brother and undoubtedly treasures the family relationship being developed through God’s plan of salvation.

— *Br. David Stein*

An Editor's Suggestion — The article above mentions Galatians 1:19, “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.” This text tells us that this apostle James was the “Lord’s brother.” But he would not have been the natural son of Mary, else when Jesus was on the cross he would have committed the care of Mary to that James, rather than to the unrelated John. This indicates that James, the apostle, who happened to be the leader of the Church at Jerusalem, author of the book “James,” and his brother Jude, another apostle, author of the book “Jude,” were relatives of Jesus, but not sons of Mary. That these two apostles were brothers of each other, and related to Jesus, suggests that Matthew 13:55, speaking of “his brethren, James ... and Judas,” were likely these two apostles, but not direct sons of Mary.

## Animals that Represent Jesus

*“The Lion of the tribe of Judah ... hath overcome”*  
(Revelation 5:5).

In the symbology and typology of scripture, Jesus is depicted in a variety of ways. The choice of these symbols is, of course, the divine choice, and each has with it specific lessons associated with the qualities of the type. Among these types are several different animals used to represent Jesus. Each animal has special characteristics, unique to each one. It is these contextual qualities that holy writ uses to describe our Lord. This study reviews the various ways providence used animals to typify or symbolize Jesus.

### (1) LION

Since ancient times lions have been revered and worshipped for their qualities. If asked what animal is the **king** of the jungle, most respond instantly, the **lion**. We encounter this lion symbol in Revelation 5:5. “One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.”

Though Revelation is a book of signs and symbols and requires interpretation, it is clear from context that this Lion represents Jesus, who was from the tribe of Judah. “It is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah” (Hebrews 7:14).

In addition, the prophecy describes the Lion as “the Root of David.” King David was of the tribe of Judah, the son of his father, Jesse. “Isaiah saith, There shall be the root of Jesse, And he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles;

On him shall the Gentiles hope” (Romans 15:12). Finally, Jesus expressly identifies himself here. “I Jesus have sent mine angel ... I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star” (Revelation 22:16).

Without question then, this Lion prophetically represents Jesus. The lion-like characteristics of our Lord emphasize his strength, majesty, and leadership.

He is indeed a **king**, and as a wise and righteous ruler he can be very fierce and powerful or very kind and sympathetic. “The king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion; But his favor is as dew upon the grass” (Proverbs 19:12). “The wicked flee when no man pursueth; But the righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1).

Before leaving this symbol of Jesus, there is another application of lion which illustrates the negative aspects of the symbol. Lions are predators, they hunt and kill and can be terrifying creatures. They have amazing strength, can leap unbelievable heights, and can go from laying down to sprinting in an instant. The Apostle Peter makes this chilling observation. “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Peter may have had in mind Proverbs 28:15 when considering Satan’s wickedness: “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear, So is a wicked ruler over a poor people.” But the Lord’s people do not need to be terrified of Satan. We have the protection and oversight of our heavenly Father and a knowledge of how Satan works. These give us the advantage. “No advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

## (2) LAMB

In Revelation chapter 5, we saw the symbol of the lion used to describe Jesus. But within the context of this chapter, another symbol is also used. “One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:5-8).

Here we have the symbol of a lamb introduced. In fact, the book of Revelation uses this symbol some 29 times, depending on the translation! The contrast between the symbol of a lion and the symbol of a lamb could not be sharper. But divine providence wishes us to understand how certain qualities in each animal depict our Lord quite beautifully.

The Bible leaves no doubt about the lamb symbolizing Jesus. “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). “With precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:19). And one of the most prominent types in the Hebrew scriptures is the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:3-11).

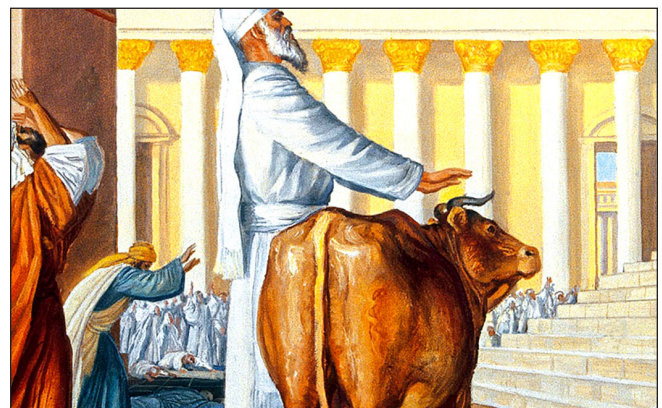
Often in the Law a lamb was used. The morning and evening sacrifice was of a lamb (Exodus 29:38-42). A lamb was also offered with the wave offering of the firstfruits of the barley harvest on Nisan 16 (Leviticus 23:10-14).

The qualities of a Lamb give us another insight into the wonderful character of Jesus. Few can resist the cuteness of a little lamb. Their innocence and submissiveness are marked qualities. These qualities are reflected in our Savior. When Jesus was brought before the authorities while on trial for his life, he made no attempt to verbally defend himself. “The passage of the scripture which he was reading was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, So he openeth not his mouth” (Acts 8:32).

There is no doubt that Jesus, who spoke as no man ever spoke, could have delivered himself by argument and persuasion (John 7:46). But he kept silent and hid who he really was. The Apostle Paul informs us that had the rulers of this world known who Jesus was, they would not have murdered him. “Which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). But like a submissive Lamb, Jesus submitted to the unjust trial and undeserved execution.

## (3) BULLOCK

Bullocks are featured prominently in the sacrifices of the Law. First, foremost, and probably most familiar, is the Bullock of the Atonement Day sacrifice in Leviticus 16. This sin offering was the basis for Israel’s relationship with Jehovah God for the coming year. Seeing Jesus in the bullock is simple and basic. Just as Israel received atonement and reconciliation with God for a year, so Jesus provides atonement and reconciliation for us and the world.



*A bullock offered for sacrifice*



“We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:11). “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

What qualities of a bullock draw attention to Jesus?

(A) A Bullock is **powerful**. Jesus was a perfect man, having all the powers of a perfect human son of God. He could read men’s hearts. “Knowing their thoughts he said unto them” (Matthew 12:25). “Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?” (Mark 2:8). “He, knowing their thoughts, said” (Luke 11:17).

Jesus uttered powerful words that had never been heard before which entered into men’s hearts. “The officers answers, Never man so spake” (John 7:46).

His power as God’s human Son allowed him to raise the dead! “He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes ... Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:43, 44).

Jesus’ power was seen by the amazed disciples when they saw him walk on water! “When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid” (John 6:19).

And at the very beginning of his ministry, he turned water into wine! “Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom” (John 2:7-9).

These and many more incidents in his earthly ministry demonstrated that he was more powerful than any man!

(B) A Bullock has **much fat**. Fat is the richest part of the sacrificial animal. The amount of fat denoted part of its value. Fat represents love and zeal, and fat burns vehemently. Jesus’ love and zeal for the heavenly Father and his precious will concerning him was so fervent and

active that when he came into contact with the trials and difficulties of the “way,” he did not falter in yielding upon the altar his **all**, but rejoiced in the knowledge of pleasing God and having his sacrifice more quickly consumed.

“It is worthy of notice that while a prime bullock is always very fat, a goat is a very lean animal. So our Lord Jesus, as represented by the bullock, had a great abundance of the fat, of zeal and love for his sacrifice, while his followers, represented by the goat, are lean in comparison” (*Tabernacle Shadows*, page 61).

(C) A Bullock is **horned**. Horns are symbols of power, and by extension, the power of kingship. “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings” (Daniel 7:24). The regal power of Jesus as God’s appointed King is beautifully seen in the horns of the bullock. “Yet I have set my king Upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psalms 2:6).

A last observation which confirms that a bullock represents a perfect human being can be found in Psalms 50:19. “Then wilt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering: Then will they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”

The object of Jesus’ Mediatorial Reign is to use his power to bring all mankind back to human perfection. This prophetic verse shows that “then,” during the Kingdom reign, mankind will be restored to human perfection — they become the “bullocks” that give their eternal loyalty and obedience to Jehovah at His altar.

#### (4) RAM

The clearest association we have of a **ram** with Jesus is on Mount Moriah. “Abraham lifted up his eyes ... behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son” (Genesis 22:13).

Here Abraham represents Jehovah God himself, giving his Son as a sacrifice. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

The ram, of course, took the place of Isaac and represented the actual death of Jesus on the cross.<sup>1</sup> So, what qualities of a ram depict our Lord? We look again to the Mosaic Law to see how the ram was used sacrificially.

A ram is a mature male sheep. It was a sacrifice used for trespass offerings, but it was the main animal used for burnt offerings. Burnt offerings show how the sacrifice was accepted, viz., fully. In showing this, they demonstrate the covenant basis of acceptance.

The burnt-offering of the ram at Mount Moriah preceded the final and most complete statement of the Abrahamic Covenant. “The angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son,



A ram caught in a thicket

that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:15-18).

So, the usage of the ram as a burnt offering points to the acceptance of Jesus as the foundational sacrifice underpinning the Abrahamic Covenant.

### (5) SERPENT

This animal we would not have thought could represent Jesus, for good reason. We associate a serpent with the original serpent in Eden! So, logically, we connect the symbolism of a serpent with **sin**! But remember the proposition given in the beginning of this article. The meaning of the type or symbol is contextual. The specific lesson is associated with what the text reveals.

In Numbers 21 the serpent is part of an historical narrative. In the context, the people of Israel began murmuring and complaining about the leadership of Moses. It was the fortieth year of their wandering and perhaps they were getting impatient with Moses. But, in reality, they complained against Jehovah God.

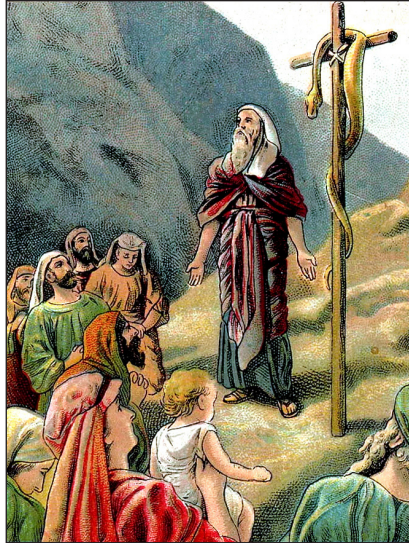
As a result, God’s judgment came against them in the form of “fiery serpents” which bit the people and many began dying. Those remaining confessed their sin and prayed for deliverance from this terrible retribution.

“Jehovah said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of copper;<sup>2</sup> and set it upon the standard: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of copper;<sup>2</sup> he lived” (Numbers 21:8, 9).

As the account indicates, only by looking at this copper serpent constructed by Moses could they be healed and live. Copper symbolized perfect humanity. As copper partially resembles gold, so perfect man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Jesus, as a perfect man, was symbolized by copper.

Imagining a serpent as a representation of Jesus may be difficult. But it was Jesus himself who made the connection between this copper serpent and himself. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life” (John 3:14, 15).

This is a direct connection between the serpent in the wilderness and Jesus, inasmuch as both were lifted high. So, how was Jesus connected with sin? The Apostle Paul gives us the answer. “Christ also, having been once



Moses with serpent on the pole

offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

Jesus was a sin-bearer! The sins he bore were not his own because he was sinless. Rather, he bore the sins of the imperfect, sinful human race. This truth was revealed even in the Hebrew scriptures. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his

own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Like the Israelites of old, we must, in faith, look upon Jesus’ sacrifice in order to be saved. “Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

### (6) WORM

If it seemed odd that a serpent would typify Jesus, we have the same dilemma when thinking of him as a worm! But this idea is presented in the 22nd Psalm. This Psalm appears to be a prophecy of Jesus’ thoughts while on the cross. We can connect it directly with Jesus’ crucifixion from verse 1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalms 22:1). These are Jesus’ exact words while on the cross near the end of his life. “About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Jesus’ last words were, “It is finished.” The end of Psalm 22 says: “They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it.” “He hath done it” is very similar to “it is finished,” the same concluding sentiment of Jesus.

If this Psalm is about Jesus on the cross, as we have demonstrated, how are we to understand verse 6? “But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people.” How was Jesus a worm?

The worm referred to here is the *tola* worm (Strong 8438). It was the source of the scarlet dye used throughout the Tabernacle of Moses. These *tola* worms were gathered by the Israelites and crushed to collect their dark red blood. The fabrics to be dyed were immersed in the blood in order to provide the desired scarlet coloring.

The scarlet color used in the Tabernacle had an



important symbolic meaning, as did the other colors used. It represented sacrificial death, and most importantly, the sacrificial death of Jesus. So, we have a direct symbolic connection between the death of Jesus and the death of the worm providing the symbolic color of scarlet.

Just as the worm was crushed to provide the dye, Jesus was “crushed” by his crucifixion. “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5, NIV).

We have already seen in this lesson the distinction between the perfect humanity of Jesus and the imperfect, sinful nature of man. This distinction also appears with respect to Jesus as a worm! “How much less man, that is a worm! And the son of man, that is a worm!” (Job 25:6).

This English translation misses an important distinction. These two worms translated “worm” come from different Hebrew words. “How much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!” (Job 25:6, ESV).

The second worm is the *tola* worm, associated as it is here with the “son of man.” But the first worm is the *rimmah* worm (Strong’s 7415), better translated “maggot.” The *rimmah* worm is associated with death and decay, precisely where we would find maggots. The contrast could not be more dramatic: Imperfect man is symbolized by the *rimmah* worm and associated with death and decay. The perfect man Jesus is symbolized by the *tola* worm and associated with sacrificial death and glory!

## (7) SEAL

The symbolic connection between a seal and Jesus is more subtle. We get the connection by going back, once again, to the Tabernacle. “And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams’ skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above” (Exodus 26:14).

It seems odd that the outermost covering of the Tabernacle was sealskins. The Israelites were in the middle of a desert wilderness, a long way from waters that would be home to seals. So, while it could provide an excellent, waterproof outer covering of the Tabernacle, considering a seal in the desert is a bit like a “fish out of water.” But there is an appropriateness to this!

The sealskin represents the humanity of Jesus as seen by the world. Jesus’ flesh did not reveal him to be what he truly was — the Messiah for whom Israel had so long sought. Though he was perfect, he did not look substantially different from other young men in the Jewish nation. When he presented himself to them, they did not perceive him to be anything other than another Jew. “He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not” (John 1:11).

Even prophetically we are told there is nothing physically compelling about how he looked. “For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”<sup>3</sup>

(Isaiah 53:2).

If one looked at the Tabernacle structure, they would see only the dark covering of sealskin and have no conception of the beautiful, artistic, and holy things within. Likewise, looking at Jesus, one would see just another Jew and have no realization of the perfection and holiness that truly was Jesus.

The seal is an aquatic animal, with its natural habitat being the water.<sup>4</sup> Jesus, in his prehuman existence, was the Logos, the Word, the archangel whose his natural habitat was the spirit plane on which he was created. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

## SUMMARY

Each of the animals we have examined symbolize or typify some important aspect or aspects of Jesus’ life and sacrificial death.

(1) **Lion** — The kingship and majesty of Jesus. (2) **Lamb** — The innocence, obedience and sacrifice of Jesus. (3) **Bullock** — The power and zeal of Jesus as a perfect man willingly laying down his life. (4) **Ram** — The fully-accepted sacrifice of Jesus connected with the Abrahamic Covenant. (5) **Serpent** — Jesus as our sin-bearer whom we must look to for life. (6) **Worm** — Jesus crushed in order to give his blood for our redemption. (7) **Seal** — Jesus messiahship hid from the world.

May each of these symbols deepen our love and affection for our Lord Jesus and motivate us to a more intense desire to be like him.

Hebrews 3:1, 2, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house.”

— Br. David Stein

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(1) It is interesting that when Isaac took note of the fact that they did not have an animal to sacrifice, “Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son: so they went both of them together” (Genesis 22:8). So Abraham himself associates the ram with a lamb, both beautiful symbols of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice.

(2) “The word *nechosheth* is improperly translated ‘brass.’ The Hebrews were not acquainted with the compound of copper and zinc known by that name. In most places of the Old Testament the correct translation would be copper, although it may sometimes possibly mean bronze, a compound of copper and tin. Indeed, a simple metal was obviously intended, as we see from Deuteronomy 8:9, 33:25, and Job 28:2. Copper was known at a very early period, and the invention of working it is attributed to Tubal-cain (Genesis 4:22)” (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, “Brass”).

(3) See also R4831:6.

(4) See *Beauties of the Truth*, February, 2010 article, “Tabernacle Coverings of Sea-cows” for the suggestion that these skins may have been that of a type of Manatee called the sea-cow or Dugong.