The Destruction of the Jewish Temple and the End of Animal Sacrifice **[1]**

Submitted by Wessel on Sunday, 15 May 2016 - 21:33



Read time: 5 minutes
In the year A.D. 70, less than 40 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans and utterly destroyed—even the magnificent Jewish Temple therein. This was a final and decisive act: unlike with the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., there were no prophecies promising restoration. And two thousand years later, a new temple seems exceedingly unlikely as different factions vie for control over the Temple Mount.

The intention of this article is not to give a history lesson of the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. It is simply to relate an interesting observation made by the presiding bishop of Reach SA [2], Glenn Lyons, during this year's Equip conference [3]. He made a remark, which he admitted is a personal musing of his and not substantiated in any way, which really caused one to stop and wonder. And the remark was this: *that God sanctioned the destruction of the Second Temple*, after Jesus's death and resurrection, *to spare the animals which would otherwise have been ritually slaughtered* in the Jewish sacrificial system.

While the Second Temple was but a shadow of the glory of Solomon's temple1, during the first century Herod the Great had expanded the building and it was quite magnificent2. God's presence did not descend on the Second Temple as in the first3, but it was used to resume the worship of the God who had led the Israelites out of Egypt through Moses. Also through Moses, God gave the Israelites a code of law, which included an extensive and elaborate animal sacrifice system. Arguably the most important aspect of the animal sacrifices was the forgiveness of sins: the substitutionary atonement made by the life of the animal for the life of the sinner4.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, it was no longer necessary for a ritualistic sacrifice5. But many Jews refused to accept the gospel message, and persisted in their ritualistic and nationalistic zeal. Eventually this led them to rebel against Rome, and Rome responded by inflicting a crushing defeat on the Jews. While the country lay smoldering, the cattle and goats and sheep and doves and pigeons would, at least, never again be led into Jerusalem for daily sacrifice.

While I am intrigued by bishop Lyons' hypothesis, I cannot stress enough that there is no direct evidence for it: no scripture, no prophecies, not even anything from the post-apostolic fathers (as far as I am aware). The closest we find is that, in scripture, God does show that He cares about His non-human creation. Only in Genesis 9, apparently, God sanctions the eating of meat for the first time. In Deuteronomy 25:4, animals are permitted to eat from the threshing floor, which means that they would literally gain reward (eat) from their work, and not simply be exploited. In Leviticus 25 it is command that, even during certain years—the years of Jubilee—the land would not be worked and have rest6.

These passage do not provide nearly enough evidence that God would sanction the destruction of the Temple to spare the lives of livestock, but there is perhaps a few more clues. Before the destruction of even Solomon's (the first) Temple, God had said through Isaiah (regarding insincere, inconsiderate, useless and hallow acts of worship)7:

> "What are the multitude of your sacrifices to me?", says the Lord.
> "I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams,
> and the fat of fed animals.
> I don’t delight in the blood of bulls,
> or of lambs,
> or of male goats."

In Hosea, God says8:

> "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

And in the book of Malachi, which is the last book in the Old Testament and God's "farewell letter" to the obstinate Jewish nation, God says the following9:

> "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you," says the Lord of Armies, "neither will I accept an offering at your hand."

Sacrificing for the sake of sacrificing was meaningless: it had to be done with a full understanding of one's brokenness before God, and the price of our sin.

We cannot say for certain that God had the Temple destroyed for the sake of animals, even if only in part. But, if I am allowed the freedom to believe such, I shall.

- 1. Ezra 3:12–13.
- 2. Mark 13:1–2
- 3. 1 Kings 8:10–11.
- 4. Leviticus 16.
- 5. Hebrews 10:1–18.
- 6. 2 Chronicles 36:15–21.
- 7. Isaiah 1:11
- 8. Hosea 6:6.
- 9. Malachi 1:6–14.

Categories:

- Encouragements [4]

Tags:

- temple [5]
- sacrifice [6]
- animals [7]
- second temple [8]

Source URL: https://siyach.org/node/1138

Links
[1] https://siyach.org/node/1138
[2] http://reachsa.org.za/
[3] https://siyach.org/node/1136
[4] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/34
[5] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/541
[6] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/542
[7] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/543
[8] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/544