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JEWISH APOLOGETICS (53)
ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTION #44
(DDR #672)

Objection #44: The prophets indicated clearly that God did not care for blood sacrifices. In fact, they practically repudiated the entire sacrificial system, teaching that repentance and prayer were sufficient. The Talmudic rabbis simply affirmed this biblical truth.

Brown's short response to this objection:

Some later rabbis may have taught this, but the prophets certainly did not. Everything the prophets did, they did out of allegiance to the Torah and to reinforce what is said. There is no possible way that they would have repudiated the God-given, God-ordained, God-sanctioned system of atonement as laid out in the Torah—especially with the Temple standing. The prophets would not have contradicted Moses. What the prophets repudiated was hypocritical religion. In other words, they rejected the performance of sacred rites and the keeping of special days when those practicing them had polluted hearts. They were perfectly clear on this. It's also interesting to note that every traditional Jew around the world prays daily for the restoration of the Temple and the sacrificial system. If sacrifices were really unnecessary and unimportant, and if the prophets utterly repudiated them, why pray daily for their restoration?¹

After this short response, Brown provides a magnificent detailed refutation of the *rabbis'* notion that God changed His mind about the need for a blood [life for life] sacrifice. When God denounces the sacrificial system in the prophets, He is denouncing a certain *kind* of sacrifices: meaningless doctrineless/truthless sacrifices—“lip service.” Let's take a look at the context of one of these prophetic “denunciations of sacrifices” to see what is going on:

¹Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections—Volume 2*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 71-103. In his book, Brown lists the objection and then gives a short response that is followed by a more developed response. This DDR series, for the most part, tracks the objection and his *short* response, after which you will find my comments. I highly recommend his book if you are interested in his longer responses (there is far too much material to include in the DDRs).

Isaiah 1:10-18, Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah. ¹¹ "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, And the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. ¹² "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? ¹³ "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. ¹⁴ "I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing *them*. ¹⁵ "So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. ¹⁶ "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, ¹⁷ Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. ¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

This passage that supposedly shows that God has repudiated the whole sacrificial system and replaced it with works. Notice in this passage we also have God's rejection of their prayers (He will not answer them). Does that mean that God has also repudiated and replaced prayer with "defending the orphan" and "pleading for the widow" (15-17). The answer buries the whole theory that God repudiated the need for blood sacrifice [teaching life for life] and replaced it with good works.

There are a couple of applications that come to mind here. First, Jesus Christ was the sacrifice that replaced/fulfilled all animal sacrifices. The animal sacrifices, in and of themselves, could never take away sin. They only taught the need for substitutionary atonement before a righteous God. Second, note in verse 17 God's concern about the needy helpless. This is consistent throughout the OT and NT (cf., James 1:27, This is pure and undefiled religion [worship] in the sight of *our* God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world). The point here is that every believer has a moral obligation to provide aid to the poor. Let us not lose sight of this important doctrine.

On the Glory Road,

Pastor Don

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Revelation 7:17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes."