

Acceptable Offerings

Key Verse: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”*
—Romans 12:1

Selected Scripture:
Leviticus 22:17-25,
31-33

IN TODAY'S KEY VERSE WE

discover the basis of our relationship with God. In the preceding chapters of his letter to the Romans, Apostle Paul had laid out the relationship which existed between God and Israel under the Law Covenant. He said they had a “zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” (Rom. 10:2) Paul also explained that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (vs. 4) Later, he stated that God did not eternally cast off Israel, but because of their

resistance to his commandments, Gentiles also are now permitted to partake of the “root and fatness” of God’s favor. These, Paul says, have been grafted into the “olive tree” that was Israel because those “branches were broken off.”—Rom. 11:17-21

Those “grafted” into the olive tree are consecrated members of the body of Christ—true believers. They have accepted the invitation of our Key Verse, on the basis of full faith in the blood of Jesus as their only means of salvation. Paul later clarifies that the Gospel Age, in which we are now living, is “a day of salvation” for those who accept this invitation to sacrifice. (II Cor. 6:2, *Emphatic Diaglott*) A separate day of salvation awaits Israel and the world after the church class has been

completed.—Rom. 11:25,26

We are to understand that the invitation to sacrifice should be considered a privilege, not a duty or a command. Paul stresses the fact that our sacrifice must be holy to be acceptable to God. In our selected Scriptures from Leviticus, we find that Israel was instructed to offer whole, unblemished offerings, illustrating that God's justice requires perfection for forgiveness of sins. We find this principle also shown in the offerings recorded in the Bible of Cain and Abel. While both offered the best of their possessions, only Abel's was accepted because it included the shedding of blood, which was the only suitable offering to show the picture God intended.

The word "sacrifice" in our Key Verse is translated from the Greek word *thusia*, the root of which means a "slaughter," or an animal slaughtered. Paul explains that we were born as natural—or animal—human beings. (I Cor. 15:44-47) If we, in full consecration, have accepted Jesus as our ransom, our earthly being is not our own, but has been "bought with a price." (I Cor. 6:19,20) If we desire to live and reign with Christ in heaven, we must follow his example in giving up our earthly life with all the rights and privileges promised to the world of mankind in God's coming kingdom on earth. Only Jesus' sacrifice was required to balance the scales of justice with regard to the ransom. (I Cor. 15:21,22) However, we have been invited to lay down our lives by being "buried with him by baptism into death," with the promise that, if faithful, we will be raised "in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. 6:3-5

We note that this invitation to present our bodies as living sacrifices is made along high and noble lines. It does not come with any entrapments, but by an appeal to reason. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) If our sacrifice is faithfully carried out, we will be partakers of the divine nature.—II Pet. 1:4 ■