

Sermon Notes Good Friday 2011

- We often get muddled over the way we think sacrifice works
- We tend to think sacrifices are offered SO THAT some good result will follow.
- This has serious implications for our understanding of God
- It can make him look as though He needs to be bought off or bribed.
- Alternatively, when tied to the death of Jesus, it often makes it look as though Jesus has to die so that something can happen.
- We try to explain this in language of sin, of money, or law.
- These are called theories of Atonement
- At worst they make it look as though God HAS to act in a certain way: and what sort of God would he then be?
- If we look at sacrifice in a different way, many of these difficulties evaporate
- For the Jewish people of Jesus' time. Sacrifices were not seen as "something...so that..."
- They were rather reminders of something already known.
- They were ritual expressions of the covenant between God and his people.
- "Covenant-sacrifices" thus are reminders in which the God and his people express their agreement and fidelity to the covenant already made.
- Christ's death on the Cross, explained by the evangelists using the terms of covenant-sacrifice, becomes a reminder of God's love for His people rather than a way of something being achieved (SO THAT)
- Rather it reveals what has always been the case....that God loves His people.
- Further, this is not a sacrifice which HAS to happen.
- The evangelists remind us of this when they show Jesus' choice in Gethsemane (Not my will, but yours, be done...)
- Thus the death of Jesus on the Cross is not a case of God being forced to sacrifice his Son,
- but rather, Jesus' free gift of himself to remind us of the Father's love.

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