

China's Blood Covenant With Shang Di



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CHINA'S BLOOD COVENANT WITH SHANG DI

INTRODUCTION

There is a touching story from the life of Tang (湯) which has been handed down to us from several ancient Chinese writers. A seven year drought and famine (1766-1760 B.C.) had begun not long after Tang's ascension to the throne. During this time, Tang and the people everywhere had sacrificed to Shang Di, lesser gods (spirits), and their ancestors to pray for rain. Finally, someone suggested that a human victim should be offered in sacrifice to Heaven and prayer made for rain. Tang appointed a day to offer the required human sacrifice and a multitude gathered to see the sight. To everyone's amazement, it became evident that Tang was going to offer himself up as the victim. He had fasted, cut off his hair and nails, and in a plain carriage, drawn by white horses, clad in rushes, in the guise of a sacrificial victim, arrived at the designated place. There, he fell to the ground and prayed the following prayer to Shang Di:

"May I, your humble son, presume to make this announcement to you, O most great and sovereign Lord Above {Shang Di}! I have offended. I dare not ask for your pardon. Whatever I have done, I do not seek to hide; the examination of it is by your mind, O Lord. I myself have offended; the people in the myriad regions have no part in my offenses. If, however, the people in the myriad regions have offended in your eyes, the offenses must also rest upon my person. So, pray, my Lord Above {Shang Di}, and pray, you spirits who serve Him, do not let the fact that I am no good, that only one man is no good, be a cause for the destruction of so many men's lives!"¹

When he had finished praying, a copious rain fell and the drought was relieved.²

¹ K.C. Wu (吳國楨) *The Chinese Heritage* (Crown Publishers, Inc.: New York 1982), 162-163. This version of the prayer is a combination of the texts found in Confucian Analects, yaoyue, and in Lushi Chunqiu, jiquiji: shunmin. Legge, *Chinese Classic*, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, p. 350.

Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. III, *Shoo King*, p. 189-190 commentary.

² James Legge, *The Religions of China* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881) 54, 55.

Tang was such an important and powerful man, yet he was willing to confess his own sinfulness to Shang Di. Tang believed that the sins of the people could be imputed, or placed on his person, so that he could die for the sins of the people he loved so much. But Shang Di did not want, nor could He accept, a human sacrifice at this time in history. We will learn why later on.

This heroic action reveals his belief that blood sacrifice could atone for the people's sins and allow Shang Di to forgive them and heal the land by sending rain. The knowledge of blood sacrifice was preserved in several of China's ancient classics. But it was specially preserved throughout China's long history in the records of the imperial sacrifices to Shang Di. These sacrifices went through a renewal during the Ming Dynasty and continued to be performed till the end of the Qing Dynasty.

THE ALTAR OF HEAVEN

We are going to focus our study of blood covenant mainly on the sacrificial ritual of the *Tian Tan* (天壇). It is most commonly referred to in English as "The Temple of Heaven." However, the literal translation of the Chinese should be "Altar of Heaven." It was not built as, nor is it today, a "Temple" (miao 廟). The Chinese word *Tan* is the English "altar." Its main purpose was for offering sacrifice to Heaven (天) or *Shang Di* (上帝) by the emperor.

The present day structure in Beijing is the largest Heaven-worshipping structure in the world. It was completed in 1421 and was repaired and expanded many times in the following three hundred years during the Ming (明 1368-1644 A.D) and Qing (清 1644-1911) dynasties. It ceased to be used as an official place of worship in 1911.³ One of the *Tian Tan's* tourist booklets asks the following question for which they had no complete answer:

“Why did ancient Chinese artisans build Echo Wall and the Three-Sound Flagstone in the sacred Heavenly Storehouse?
Considering the way they built the Hall of Prayer for a Good Harvest and the Circular Mound Altar, it must concern heaven. However, there is still no complete satisfactory answer.”⁴ (emphasis mine)

³Heyi Chen, ed., *Tiantan* (Beijing: Pictorial Pub. House, 1992) 4-12

⁴ *Tiantan*, edited by China Pictorial Publications, *China Pictorial Publishing House*, Beijing. n.d., 79)

HISTORY OF CHINA'S WORSHIP AND SACRIFICE

The *Li Chi* (禮記) says, "The border sacrifice is the illustration of the way of Heaven."⁵ "Hence we have the saying that the first and greatest teaching is to be found in sacrifice."⁶ We will discover some of these great teachings that illustrate the way of Heaven as we continue our study. These teachings will enable us to get closer to the hearts and minds of the ancients and make us wiser and humbler.

In ancient China, the complex of buildings associated with the worship of Shang Di (Heaven) was also known as the *Ming Tang* (明堂). The *Ming T'ang Ta Tao Lu* (明堂大道錄) by Hui Tung (惠棟)⁷ says,

The Ming T'ang was the great temple of the Son of Heaven {the emperor} for the purposes of the Di sacrifice, the sacrifice to his ancestors, the holding of the spring and autumn feudal audiences, the ritual of plowing the sacred plot, the bestowing of alms upon his old relatives, the honoring of worthy officials, the archery tournament banquet, the offering of captives of war, the control of the calendar, the notification of the new moon, and the ordering of government. Therefore it was known as the Palace of Great Instruction.⁸

China's great leaders always had a special place to offer blood sacrifice to Shang Di whom they knew to be the one true sovereign God.

We will now study the practice of blood covenant sacrifice to Shang Di from China's earliest recorded history up to 1911. As we take this historic journey, we will point out parallels to blood sacrifice found around the world and also as it is found in God's Word, the Bible. This

⁵ James Legge, *Li Ki*, ed. F. Max Muller, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 27 (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 430.

⁶ James Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 28, 244-245 and vol. 27, 406.

⁷ He is probably the same person as Hui Shih-ch'i (惠士奇) whose literary names were T'ien-mu (天牧) and Chung-ju (仲儒) (1670 - 1741 AD). This is a very rare book in Chinese. Our references come from William E. Soothill's English translation, *The Hall of Light* (*Ming Tang* = 明堂)

⁸ William E. Soothill, *The Hall of Light: A Study of Early Chinese Kingship*, ed. Lady Hosie and G. T. Hudson (London: 1951), 132.

gives us a three-fold witness of the life changing power of entering into a blood covenant relationship with Shang Di.

Sacrifice During China's Legendary Period

The traditional dates of this legendary period must be considered very rough estimates as they have not yet been settled. The origin of the Altar of Heaven can be traced back to Fu Hsi (伏羲) who supposedly lived from 2852 to 2738 B.C. He lived one hundred sixteen years. It is interesting to note that nothing is said about his age being unusual at that time even though in the *Li Chi* compiled in the Han dynasty (200 B.C.), we are told "when a man is eighty or ninety, we say of him, 'he is very old'. At a hundred, he is called a centenarian, and has to be fed."⁹ His name (*Hsi*, or *Xi* = 義) bears witness to his character as sacrificer. *Hsi* could mean "one who kills in sacrifices." The Chinese character *hsi* includes the character for "lamb" (yang = 羊) which is often used in sacrifice. Some traditions credit Fu Hsi with inventing Chinese characters.

Shen Nung (神農), who replaced Fu Hsi in 2737 B.C., is said to be the founder of the Ming Tang. He is believed to have initiated the "sacrifices to the predecessors" (祭祖) in the Ming Tang of his day.¹⁰ Shen Nung supposedly lived from 2838 to 2698 B.C. which means he lived one hundred and forty years. Yet nothing is said about this being unusual. The altar of agriculture in Beijing bears his name today.

Huang Di (黃帝), the Yellow Emperor, lived from 2704 till 2595 B.C., one hundred and nine years. China's Taoists and Buddhists have woven a web of many fancy myths around his person. But apart from the myths, we are told in the encyclopedia *T'u Shu Chi Ch'eng* (圖書集成) that Huang Di built a *Ho Kung* (侯宮) or assembly hall for the purpose of sacrificing to Shang Di.¹¹ Some traditions place the origin of Chinese characters in Huang Di's time around 2600 - 2500 B.C.

⁹ James Legge, *Li Ki*, ed. F. Max Muller, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 27 (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 66.

Many people in the Bible were also living unusually long lives at that time in history.

¹⁰ William E. Soothill, *The Hall of Light: A Study of Early Chinese Kingship*, ed. Lady Hosie and G. T. Hudson (London: 1951), 134.

¹¹ William E. Soothill, *Ibid.*, 135-136. Or *T'ung Chien Wai Chi* (Mirror of History), Liu Shu's section. Or *Chou Li*, Ta Ssu Yo section.

Emperor Yao (堯) came to the throne around 2357 B.C. and reigned around seventy-three years. He sacrificed in the *Wen Tsu* (文祖) "the Hall of Predecessors" which is identified with the Ming Tang (明堂).¹² James Legge translates *Wen Tsu* as "The Temple of the accomplished ancestor."¹³ It is possible to translate it as "The Hall of the Patriarchs of Culture (文明)" (i.e. "founders of civilization").¹⁴

Yao lived around the time of Noah after the flood, approximately 2350 B.C. Noah also built an altar unto the LORD (Gen. 8:20-22). After the blood of the burnt offerings was offered on the altar, the LORD made a blood covenant promise to Noah and mankind that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest . . shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22).

Shun (舜), the fifth legendary sage king, ascended the throne in 2255 B. C. He lived from 2317 to 2208 B.C., which is one hundred and nine years. We are told he carried on the sacrifices of his predecessors according to tradition, rectified the calendar, and enacted laws in his Ming Tang. In the *Shoo King* (書經), we read that Shun "sacrificed specially, but with the ordinary forms, to Shang Di; sacrificed purely to the six honored ones; offered their appropriate sacrifices to the hills and rivers; and extended his worship to the hosts of spirits (shen= 神)."¹⁵

Here we observe the beginnings of drifting away from the pure monotheistic worship of Shang Di. Instead of just worshipping the Creator, which is the right thing to do, they began to venerate parts of God's creation along with the numerous *shen* (Rom. 1:21-23)."¹⁶

¹² Ibid., 137.

¹³ James Legge, *The Shoo King*, The Chinese Classics: vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.; reprint, Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1983), 32-33 and commentary.

¹⁴ We find a provocative parallel to Biblical history in Genesis 4:20-22. Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents & have cattle. Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp & organ. Tubal-cain was an instructor in brass & iron.

¹⁵ James Legge, *Shoo King*, 33-35 par. 6 with the commentary. Also Soothill, 138. Notice that Shang Di is totally differentiated from the *shen*. *Shen* generally has the meaning of "spirits" in the Classics. (compare Psalm 148)

¹⁶ James Legge, *The Li Ki (Li Ji)*, *The Sacred Books of China*, edited by Max Muller, Vol. 27, p. 430-431 especially par. 8. : "All things originate from Heaven; man originates from his (great) ancestor." This helps to explain

Yu (禹), the founder of the Hsia Dynasty (夏朝) was appointed to the throne in 2205 B.C. because of his virtue and ability to solve the problems resulting from China's great flood. The Hsia Dynasty lasted from 2205 to 1766 B.C. Yu's son replaced him at his death and the hereditary monarchy began which lasted until 1911 A.D. Before Yu, "virtue" had been the most important requirement in choosing the next emperor. From the Hsia Dynasty onwards, heredity became the determining factor in becoming emperor.¹⁷ Historically, the Hsia Dynasty matches up with the times of Abraham in the Bible (approx. 1996 - 1821 B.C.). Abraham understood the importance of blood sacrifice in his relationship with the one true God (Gen. 15). We now move from the legendary period to documented history as we study:

Sacrifice During the Yin-Shang Dynasty (1766 - 1122 B.C.)¹⁸

This dynasty is sometimes referred to by two names because they moved their capital to Yin (near An-yang) under the last twelve emperors of the Shang Dynasty. Black was the imperial color of the Hsia Dynasty. So for sacrifices, they chose black animals. Tang, the founder of the Shang Dynasty, changed the imperial color to white. Thus they offered white animals in sacrifice.¹⁹ It is also during the time of Tang that they first started using stone instead of earth to make their sacrificial altars.²⁰

the worldview of the ancient Chinese that led to placing the worship/veneration of man along side the worship of Shang Di.

¹⁷ Yu understood Heaven to be sovereign. See James Legge, *Shoo King*, "The Books of Yu" p. 61, 64, 66, 74. For Shang Di, see page 79

¹⁸ Dates for the Yin-Shang, and Chou Dynasties are still not fixed with certainty. Scholars give dates for the end of the Shang from 1122 to 1018 B.C.

¹⁹ Legge, *The Li Ki*, p. 125-126.

²⁰ K.C. Wu (吳國楨) *The Chinese Heritage* (Crown Publishers: New York 1982) 161-162, 299. James Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, 125-126. Vol. 28, p. 35.

For much of China's history altars were basically mounds of earth. Lester James Bilsky, *The State Religion of Ancient China*, 41, 45. Also see Legge XXVIII, 32, *Li Chi*.

In both China and Israel the national center for the worship of God began with dirt foundations but finally ends up with gloriously majestic white stone foundations. (In Israel the Tabernacle had a dirt floor and the Temple stone).

Though the Shang people added many new sacrifices to those of the Hsia Dynasty, they seem to have been faithful at preserving the ceremonies for the worship of Shang Di (Heaven).²¹

We have already looked at the touching story from the life of Tang resulting from the great drought of 1766 - 1760 BC.²² Because Tang had such a profound understanding of blood sacrifice, he was willing to offer himself up as the substitutionary victim to save his people from certain death.

Moses, the great leader of Israel (1444 B.C.), demonstrated this same great sacrificial love for his people. He also was willing to die for the people if it would enable God to forgive them their great sin.

"And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book (of salvation)" (Ex. 32:31-33).

Neither Tang in China, nor Moses in Israel, could die for the sins of the people. It was impossible for them to do so. No imperfect person could offer himself in sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God's perfect law.

But is it possible there is someone, who has lived a perfectly righteous life, who thus would be able to offer himself in sacrifice for the sins of others? Such a person would have to live a perfect life from birth to death. They could never have sinned even once in thought, word, or deed. They would have to perfectly fulfill and legally satisfy all the just demands of Heaven's holy law.

Sacrifice During the Western Chou Dynasty (1122 - 771 B.C.)

There are abundant historical resources to study the royal sacrifices of the Chou Dynasty (周朝).

²¹ K.C. Wu (吳國楨) *The Chinese Heritage* (Crown Publishers, Inc.: New York 1982), 171-172. Also *Li Ki*, vol. 27, p. 26, 416-448.

²² The Bible teaches that drought was often a sign of God's judgment for worshipping false gods (Deut. 11:16-17). Joseph saves the Middle East from a seven year famine around 1715 BC (Gen. 41:15-32, 54-57). God is merciful to all.

The emperor offered the Great Sacrifice to Shang Di as the religious head of the nation, reigning by Heaven's mandate (not by divine right, for China had no concept of imperial divinity).²³ During the Chou Dynasty the emperor took the title "Son of Heaven."²⁴

King Wu, who overthrew the Yin-Shang Dynasty, "attached great importance to the people being taught the duties of the five relations of society, to take care for food, for funeral ceremonies, and for sacrifices."²⁵ Thus at that time, people may still have understood some of the original meaning of the sacrifices. When they worshiped Heaven and Earth, though they offered sacrifice to Hau Chi (or Hou Ji), they never put him on the same level as Shang Di because the *Li Ji* tells us: "If there was anything wrong with the victim [sacrifice] intended for God, it was used for Ki (Ji). That intended for God required to be kept in its clean stall for three months. That intended for [Hau] Ki (Ji) simply required to be perfect in its parts."²⁶ This was the way in which they made a distinction between Heaven and man.

Throughout China's History Special Sacrifices Were Offered to Shang Di. The Animals Used in These Sacrifices Must Be Perfect

Sacrifices to Shang Di were offered at the suburban altar (*chiao* = 郊) on behalf of the entire nation.

The largest and most prized sacrifices were bulls.²⁷ Only animals complete within and without could be used for sacrificial purposes.²⁸

²³ John Clark Archer, *Faiths Men Live By* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1934), 61. Emperors were only deified after their death!

²⁴ The emperor is "the Son of Heaven" only as an honorable title. Jesus was the Son of Heaven because of His divine essence as the Creator God manifested in human flesh (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; John 1:1, 14). The emperor's origin was from the earth. Jesus' origin was from heaven (I Cor. 15:47; John 3:31; 6:38-39).

²⁵ James Legge, *Shoo King*, p. 316 par. 10. p. 702 index.

²⁶ Legge, *The Li Ki*, Vol. 27, p. 430

²⁷ Bilsky, *The State Religion of Ancient China*, 72. Or Legge, *Chinese Classics, The She King*, p. 375-376. See Bull in the Index on p. 652.

One of the major offerings mentioned in the Bible was a young bull without blemish. (Lev. 1:3, 5; 3:1; 4:3, 12).

²⁸ Legge, *Li Ki* vol. 27, p. 445. Ross, *Original Religion of China*, 289.

The bulls were carefully bred and raised to be in perfect condition and of pure color. The Chou Dynasty's preferred color seems to have been red.²⁹ The bull must be young (i.e., having never mated). They also offered sheep and lambs.³⁰

Having a right spirit was more important than the costliness of the sacrifice, but everything must be done according to accepted ritual.³¹ The *Shu Jing* states that one of the reasons the Hsia Dynasty was destroyed by the “decree of Heaven” (天命) was because of their bad attitude and irreverent spirit in performing the duties of the sacrifices.³² The one true God requires everyone to worship with humility, reverence, and purity.³³

It is interesting to note that the *Li Chi* (Li Ji) mentions that a tenth of a state's yearly expenditures should be devoted to all the affairs of sacrifice.³⁴

Wine Must Always Be Used with Caution

In China, wine was an important part of the sacrificial ceremony. However, its use always came with a warning of its inherent dangers.

For sacrifices, spirits (alcoholic beverages) should be employed. When Heaven was sending down its favoring decree, and laying the foundations of the eminence of our people, spirits were used only in the great sacrifices. When heaven has sent down its terrors, and our people. . .

²⁹ Bilsky, *Ibid.*, 72-73.

Sometimes God required the Jewish people to sacrifice a completely red heifer (a young cow that has not yet had a calf). (Numbers 19:1-22)

³⁰ A ram and a bull are mentioned together as offerings to Heaven in the Ming Tang. Legge, *Chinese Classics, The She King*, p. 575-6 with commentary. Bilsky, *Ibid.*, 72-73.

³¹ John Clark Archer, *Faiths Men Live By*, 61.

³² James Legge, *The Shoo King*, pp., 492-500.

³³ The Bible emphasizes the importance of having a right spirit and motive when we offer sacrificial worship (Ps. 40:6-8; Ps. 51:6, 16-17, 19).

³⁴ Legge, *Li Ki*, Vol. 27, p. 222 and Bilsky, *Ibid.*, 72

The Holy Scriptures also make it clear that the one true God requires his people to give a tenth (tithe) of their wealth to the service of God (Read Malachi 3:8-10 and Genesis 14:18-20). We must give cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7).

lost their virtue, this might also be invariably traced to their indulgence in spirits. Yea, the ruin of states may be also traced invariably to their crime in the use of spirits.³⁵

One day, King-chung (敬仲) “was entertaining the marquis of Ts’e (齊桓公) at his house, who became joyous over the spirits [wine], and said, ‘Let us continue [to drink] with lights [because night had come].’ But he refused, saying, . . . ‘I dare not do it.’ The commentator on this event says, “The superior man will say, ‘In drinking there should be the complete observance of the rules; but not to carry it on to excess was righteousness. Completely to observe the rules with his prince, and then not to allow him to go to excess, was truly virtuous.’”³⁶

The *Li Chi* mentions that "Before the discovery of the distillation of spirits, water was the liquid offered in libation. It is therefore the most honorable of all liquid offerings. It is called the 'Dark Wine'."³⁷

Special Robes

Special sacrificial robes were made for the Son of Heaven (the emperor) to perform his sacrificial duties. These were holy garments used only on the occasion of worshipping Heaven.³⁸ They were made of silk produced by the silk worm.³⁹ The Creator has filled this little creature with wisdom to make the material for the emperor's sacrificial garments (Ex. 28:2-3). This means the emperor was clothed in robes produced from

³⁵ James Legge, *The Shoo King*, p. 399-402 par. 2,3,4.

In the Bible wine was also used for libations at sacrificial ceremonies (Read Numbers 28:7, Leviticus 23:13, and Ex. 29:41). The same one true God also condemned Israel for overindulging in alcoholic wine (Habak 2:15; Isa. 28:7)

³⁶ James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, p., 102-103 par. 3 commentary.

³⁷ John Ross, *The Original Religion of China*, 250.

³⁸ There is a very instructive parallel here with the holy garments prepared for Aaron for the annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Ex. 28:2-3; 29:29-30; Lev. 16:3-4, 23). Aaron is a prophetic type of the Lord Jesus Christ who is our "Great High Priest" (Heb. 3:1; 4:14). The other priests in Israel also had special robes for offering sacrifice to God (Lev. 8:6-9, 13).

³⁹ Bilsky, *The State Religion of Ancient China*, 77. Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, p. 265.

the work of a creature that experiences a death (as a worm) and resurrection (as a moth).⁴⁰

Singing and Dancing

There was singing and dancing at the imperial sacrifices. The name of the dance may refer to the season in which it was performed or the dynasty from which it was inherited. The *Li Chi* mentions the *Hsiang* dance (象舞) and The Great Wu (大武之舞) dance which was created in the twelfth year of King Wu's reign (about 1110 B.C.) for use in the summer sacrifice to Heaven. It portrayed King Wu's victory over the Shang State.⁴¹ The Shang Dynasty was overthrown because they forsook a life of virtue. So the Chinese Classics, as well as sacrificial rituals, have memorialized Shang Di's judgment upon a backslidden sinful people.⁴²

There is a discussion in the *Li Ji* about what kind of music is appropriate at sacrifices. A student of Confucius, Zi Xia (子夏), said, "The airs [tune/melody] of Kang [Zheng] go to wild excess, and debauch the mind; those of Sung [Song] tell of slothful indulgence and women, and drown the mind; those of Wei are vehement and rapid, and perplex the mind; and those of Khi [Qi] are violent and depraved and make the mind arrogant. The airs [tunes/melody] of those four states all stimulate libidinous desire, and are injurious to virtue; they should therefore not be used at sacrifices."⁴³ Thus the music must be peaceful and cultivate virtue.

Ancient China Understood Substitutionary Sacrifice

There are historical events in China's history that reveal a profound understanding of substitutionary sacrifice. The Prince of Wei (微子) was the elder brother of Di Xin (帝辛), the last emperor of the Shang. He had gone into hiding just before Wu Wang (武王) defeated the Shang to establish the Chou Dynasty (1122 B.C.). After Wu Wang's

⁴⁰ Jesus the true Son of God, actually died and resurrected from the dead in order to clothe us with "the garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10).

⁴¹ Bilsky, *Ibid.*, 93. also Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 28, p. 33, 253-254.

⁴² Israel also memorialized victory over their enemies with song (Ex. 15:1) and special dance (Ex. 15:20-21).

⁴³ Legge, *Li Ki*, Vol. 28, p. 118-119

victory, the Prince of Wei literally offered himself as a living sacrifice to the new king. He approached Wu Wang's camp with his upper body stripped, his wrists bound together, dragging a lamb, accompanied by an attendant carrying sacrificial vessels. This showed that he was ready and willing to be used as a sacrifice, like the lamb, at the conqueror's will.⁴⁴

A moving story of the Duke of Zhou (周公) illustrates that the Chinese understood the possibility of a man becoming a substitutionary sacrifice to save someone else. When Wu Wang (1169 - 1116 B.C.), first emperor of the Chou Dynasty, was taken seriously ill, the Duke of Zhou prayed to his great grandfather, grandfather, and father asking them to intercede with Shang Di to let his elder brother live and take his own life instead as a substitute. The next day Wu Wang began to recover.⁴⁵

The prayer was recorded and placed in a special metal box in the hall of ancestors. Wu Wang eventually died five years later, and his young son, Cheng Wang (成王), became emperor at 13 years old. Due to vicious rumors, the Duke of Zhou came under suspicion of not being loyal to the young emperor. Heaven intervened by sending a great storm. Everyone was so terrified, they went to the hall of the ancestors to pray for help. While there, they found the Duke's self sacrificing prayers for his brother and family. The young emperor wept and said, "Now Heaven has moved its terrors to display the virtue of the Duke of Zhou."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ K.C. Wu (吳國楨) *The Chinese Heritage* (Crown Publishers, Inc.: New York, 1982), 300. Wu Wang himself untied the prince's wrists and restored him to all the honors he had enjoyed in the Yin court. Today Christians are willing to "present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God" (Rom. 12:1).

⁴⁵ Legge, *Chinese Classics, The Shoo King*, p. 351-360.

K.C. Wu, *The Chinese Heritage* (Crown Publishers, Inc.: New York 1982) 317-318. Apparently The Duke of Zhou considered the spirit of the good deceased forefathers as a kind of priesthood that could intercede for him before the sovereign Shang Di. God in his infinite mercy honored the prayer not because Zhou was right in going through mediators but because of his broken and contrite spirit (Ps. 51:17 with Acts 17:30-31). Shang Di has made it very clear that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

⁴⁶ Legge, *The Shoo King*, pp. 359-360. It is evident the ancient Chinese understood Shang Di was sovereign over the affairs of mankind.

Si Ma Qian in the *Historical Records* mentions the Duke of Zhou was restored to favor after he died and Cheng Wang gave his descendants the privilege to sacrifice to Heaven, and Wen Wang, their ancestor.

The Altar of Heaven complex (1421-1911 A.D.) teaches a profound lesson in the fact that no animals were allowed to walk on top of the Danbi Bridge (丹陛橋). The sacrificial animals were sent to the Butcher Pavilion (宰牲亭) through an arch gateway under the Bridge. This gateway was called "The Gate of Hell." (鬼門關)⁴⁷ This is clearly symbolic of a substitutionary sacrifice giving its life to set another free from certain death. The symbolism is very clear that the sacrifice is taking upon itself the judgment that otherwise would befall the sacrificer.

All these well documented historical facts make it clear that the idea of substitutionary sacrifice was clearly known and understood in ancient China. However, a doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice is not recorded in the Classics. The emphasis in China has been on preserving the practical ritual of sacrifice rather than explaining its meaning. This is because often they were using the sacrificial system as a means of preserving the political and social order. Even though man deviated from the original spiritual intent of the sacrifices, that does not negate the original divine purpose that can still be discovered in the symbolism that has been fairly faithfully preserved. This research is intended to help you discover the divine meaning hidden in the great sacrificial ceremony to Shang Di. Now, let's look at the serious breakdown of ritual that occurred afterwards.

Blood Covenants During the Spring and Autumn Period (770 to 476 B.C.)

The *Chun Tsew* (春秋) with the *Tso Chuen* (左傳)⁴⁸ are the Chinese classics which record the history during the Spring and Autumn period. They contain over one hundred references to blood covenants. During this time in history, the Chinese had a remarkable understanding of sacrifice as it related to the solemnity and binding force of blood covenants.

The charts that follow list the five main purposes and seven main procedures of blood covenant that were common to China, nations around the world, and the Holy Bible.

⁴⁷ China Pictorial Publications, *Tiantan* (Beijing, China: 1992), 16.

⁴⁸ The *Ch'un Ts'ew* is a classic edited by Confucius. It is a consecutive chronicle of events year by year of the State of Lu. The *Tso Chuen* is a commentary written about the *Ch'un Ts'ew* by a man named Tso.

<u>5 Purposes for Making Blood Covenants</u>	
1	Covenants could establish peace between enemies
2	Covenants united armies for war or defense
3	Covenants were established for the protection of the weaker party
4	Covenants established strong friendship
5	Covenants established indissoluble relationships that could not be broken without serious consequences

<u>7 Procedures of Cutting a Blood Covenant</u>	
1	Blood covenant required shedding the blood of an innocent perfect substitute
2	Every covenant has an oath that involves a blessing and a curse
3	Giving gifts was an important part of blood covenant
4	A sign or memorial of the covenant was established
5	Blood covenant established a strong bond of fellowship around a covenant meal
6	A new name could be given as part of the covenant. This was symbolical of becoming a new person
7	Each new generation must personally enter into the covenant once it has been established by the forefathers

WE NOW STUDY THE FIVE PURPOSES FOR MAKING BLOOD COVENANTS IN CHINA

1. In China, covenants could establish peace between enemies

Covenants in China were made to establish peace between two or more feuding parties.⁴⁹ They were a means of bringing about

⁴⁹ James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, p., 21 par. 2 commentary and pp. 220-221 par. 4 commentary.

reconciliation.⁵⁰ Thus a covenant brings with it a commitment to banish everything contrary to good relations among the covenanting parties.⁵¹

The *Tso Chuen* (左傳) commentary says, "In the course of an invasion, the Marquis of Ts'e (齊侯) laid siege to Lung (龍) (587 BC). His favorite, Leu-p'oo Tsew-kwei (盧蒲就魁), was made prisoner when attacking one of the gates. The Marquis said, 'Do not put him to death, and I will make a covenant with you, and not enter your borders.'" ⁵² Most likely an animal would have died to make the covenant, and Leu-p'oo and the citizens of Lung would have been spared. However, the people of Lung did not make the covenant but put Leu-p'oo to death. Three days later, the Marquis conquered the city of Lung. It is wise to make a covenant of peace with a government that is more powerful than you when they give you the chance. There is no government more powerful than that of Shang Di (Rev. 19:11-16).

2. In China, covenants united armies for war or defense

Many of the covenants mentioned in the *Tso Chuen* were for the purpose of uniting armies together for war and defense. The feudal lord of the state where a covenant was made was expected to supply the provisions for all the covenanting parties.⁵³ Covenants were made to establish someone in political office.⁵⁴

Making a covenant with someone gives the privilege to make requests for supplies or help from the party covenanted with.⁵⁵

3. In China, covenants were established to protect the weaker party

A covenant was often made between a superior and an inferior as regards to political or social position. This was done for the protection or

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 68 par. 1,2 commentary and p. 90 par. 4 commentary

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 154 par. 4 commentary.

⁵² James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, p. 337, 344 with commentary.

⁵³ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen* pp. 176-177 par. 2,3,4 commentary.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 83-84 par. 2,3 commentary and p. 95 par. 4 commentary.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 124-125 par. 4 commentary.

benefit of the inferior (i.e., the smaller state or ruler from that state).⁵⁶ The subordinate party sometimes would acknowledge their humility and dependence by bowing their head to the ground.⁵⁷ Thus covenants were a strong bond of submission to "the greater." The larger, stronger state normally initiated the covenant relationship because "A small state is sure to bring calamity on itself by striving for the power of commanding covenants."⁵⁸

4. In China, covenants established strong friendship

In China, a covenant was a way to publicly declare or confirm your strong friendship with the other party.⁵⁹ A covenant was a strong commitment to carry out a plan of action to secure common goals.⁶⁰ Covenant friends would come to each other's defense if an enemy attacked them.⁶¹

These kind of blood covenants were found all over the world. "It is a peculiarity of the primitive compact of blood-friendship, that he who would enter into it must be ready to make a complete surrender of himself, in loving trust to him with whom he covenants."⁶²

5. In China, covenants established indissoluble relationships that could not be broken without serious consequences

Blood covenants around the world and throughout history have been recognized as the closest, the holiest, and most indissoluble compact conceivable.⁶³ Their purpose was meant to secure a relationship by guaranteeing that it would never be broken. A blood covenant's power was due in part to the realization that the spirit world (ultimately Shang Di) was somehow involved in holding people accountable to keep their covenant oaths. When the people of Tsin tried to renew a covenant, they

⁵⁶ Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, pp. 236-237 par. 6

⁵⁷ Legge, *Ibid.*, p. 419 par. 2-4 commentary.

⁵⁸ Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, p. 180 par. 2 commentary and p. 533 commentary

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 196 par. 7 commentary. p. 748 par. 5 and commentary.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145 par 5 commentary.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 338 par. 7 commentary. Also p. 348 par. 8.

⁶² Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, 219-220.

⁶³ H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, 204.

were rebuked with the words: "Since your virtue is not strong, of what use is the renewal of covenants?"⁶⁴ We must keep our word. "He who is false to his word is sure to suffer for it."⁶⁵

In the *Tso Chuen*, a question is asked: "Is it not improper thus to violate the covenant, which we made so recently with Tsin?" Tsze-fan (子反) replied, 'When we can gain an advantage over our enemies, we must advance without any consideration of covenants. When Shuh-she (申叔) heard of Tsze-fan's speech, he said, 'Tsze-fan will certainly not escape an evil end. Good faith is seen in the maintenance of propriety, and propriety is a protection to the person. If a man put away both good faith and propriety, though he wish to avoid an evil end, can he do so?'⁶⁶ China understood the seriousness and binding power of blood covenant relationships.

So we learn that, though covenants were sometimes broken in China, experience had convinced them that doing so would bring down the severe judgment of Heaven. Shang Di would hold the people accountable for keeping their covenant commitments. Something of the binding power of a covenant can be seen in the fact that Duke Hwan (桓公) did not break a covenant even though he had been forced into it against his will. One Chinese commentator says the "good faith of Duke Hwan began from this covenant at Ko (柯) to be acknowledged throughout the Kingdom."⁶⁷ He ruled 692-661 B.C.

Thus we observe, the high moral character of the covenanting parties combined with the solemnity of shedding the blood of an innocent sacrifice established the strongest, most unbreakable relationship possible between two parties.

WE NOW STUDY THE SEVEN PROCEDURES OF CUTTING A BLOOD COVENANT IN CHINA

1. Blood covenant required shedding the blood of a perfect innocent substitute

⁶⁴ Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, p. 370 par. 2 commentary. Also Trumbull p. 9

⁶⁵ Legge, *Ibid.*, p. 533

⁶⁶ Legge, *Ibid.*, p. 388 par. 7 commentary

⁶⁷ Legge, *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91 par. 4 commentary.

The word translated "covenant" is (盟). Legge explains that no other term would be adequate in English. "On all occasions there was the death of the victim, over which the contracting parties appealed to superior powers, wishing that, if they violated the terms of their covenant, they might meet with a fate like that of the slain animal. One definition of the Chinese term is "an agreement with an oath"(誓約).⁶⁸

The *Li Ji* [Kî] mentions that the sacrifice to Shang Di, as well as some other sacrifices, had to be perfect.⁶⁹

The blood represents the life. "The offering of the blood was because of the breath which is contained in it."⁷⁰ It represents a perfect life!⁷¹ "The (examination of the) hair and the (taking of the) blood was an announcement that the victim was complete within and without. This announcement showed the value set on its being perfect."⁷²

The blood was considered sacred. We find references that tell us the blood was to be handled in a special manner.⁷³ The blood of the sacrifice at the Temple of Heaven is reverently poured out into the earth to be buried there.⁷⁴

2. Every covenant has an oath that involves a blessing and a curse

Imprecatory prayers or oaths (誓言) were a common feature of the rite of blood covenanting around the world.⁷⁵

We also find clear examples of this in the *Tso Chuen*. The words of one covenant were, "May he who departs from this covenant not enjoy his state."⁷⁶ Another covenant stated, "We will all assist the royal house, and do no harm to one another. If any one transgresses this covenant, may the intelligent spirits destroy him, so that he shall lose his people and not

⁶⁸ Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, p. 5 commentary.

⁶⁹ James Legge, *Li Ki, Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 27, p. 430

⁷⁰ Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, p. 445

⁷¹ See page 5, The Animals Used in Sacrifice Must be Perfect

⁷² Legge, *Ibid.* pp. 444-445. also see Ross, page 289.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, *Li Ki*, vol. 28, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, p.150. Edkin, *Religion in China*, p 22

⁷⁵ Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, pp. 9, 20, 31, 53, 62, 154.

⁷⁶ Legge, *Ibid.*, p. 36 par. 4 commentary.

be able to possess his state, and, to the remotest posterity, let him have no descendant old or young."⁷⁷

3. Giving gifts was an important part of blood covenant

In China, the giving of gifts was a proper part of covenant making. Chung-sun Meeh (also called Mang- sun 孟孫 asked to negotiate a peace with the army of Ts'oo (楚). He "begged leave to go and bribe it [to retreat]. He took with him one hundred mechanics, one hundred female embroiderers, and as many weavers, with [the Duke's son] Kung-hang (公衡), as a hostage, and with them requested a covenant, when Ts'oo agreed to make peace."⁷⁸ "What is done at sacrifices afforded the greatest example of the distribution of favors. Acts of favor were sure to descend from the superior to those below."⁷⁹ "Anciently at the sacrifice they conferred rank, and bestowed robes. At the *Khang* (嘗-秋祭) sacrifice they gave out fields and homesteads."⁸⁰

4. A sign or memorial of the covenant was established

The Temple of Heaven stands as a monumental memorial of China's blood covenant with Shang Di. The planting of trees has been an important aspect of the Temple of Heaven complex in Beijing. Some of the cypress trees are five hundred years old.⁸¹ The Xia and Shang Emperors also surrounded their altars with trees.⁸²

5. Blood covenant established a strong bond of fellowship around a covenant meal

It is evident in the *Tso Chuen* that in China, they had a feast together after making covenants. They might also sing 'odes' (songs from the *She King*) at the feast.⁸³ We find the altar for sacrifice and the tables for meals in close proximity in the worship of the emperor at the yearly

⁷⁷ Legge, *Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, p. 532 par. 2 commentary and p. 211 p. 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 348, par. 8, 9, 10 commentary.

⁷⁹ James Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 28, page 243.

⁸⁰ Ibid., page 250.

⁸¹ Heyi Chen, ed. *Tiantan*, (Beijing: Pictorial Pub House, 1992), 15, 20

⁸² K.C. Wu, *The Chinese Heritage*, p. 162

⁸³ Legge, *Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, pp. 236-237 par. 6 comm.

Temple of Heaven sacrifice. So prominent is the feasting at the yearly sacrifices, one scholar says, "The Chinese idea of a sacrifice to the supreme ruler of Heaven and Earth is that of a banquet."⁸⁴ Access to God is obtained by shedding the blood (at the altar). Then the emperor can enjoy communion with God at the meal (the table).

6. A new name could be given as part of the covenant

The honorary title of a deceased sovereign was first proclaimed at the Great Sacrifice to Heaven at the winter solstice.⁸⁵ "It is generally assumed by Chinese historians that the practice of conferring posthumous titles on deceased sovereigns began with the Shang's so honoring Tang, the founder of their dynasty."⁸⁶

Marriage is considered a blood covenant. Blood is shed on the wedding night when the relationship is consummated and the two separate parties are now united in strong bond. The wife takes a new name in this covenant relationship.

7. Each new generation must personally enter into the covenant once it has been established by the forefathers

Many of the references to covenants in the *Tso Chuen* were actually for the purpose of renewing a previous covenant.⁸⁷

Various reasons are given for renewing covenants by the shedding of new blood. However, there is one major underlying principle revealed by this need for constant repetition of the blood covenant sacrifices. These sacrifices could not empower those who offer them to keep their obligations. Human weakness required constant reminders of obligations to each other and to Shang Di.

Based on the same principle, the emperor needs to repeat the sacrifice at the Temple of Heaven annually to remind himself of his obligation and of his subordinate position before Shang Di. They were just a temporary atonement designed by Shang Di to portray a future

⁸⁴ Joseph Edkins, *Religion in China*, 23, 32.

We have a very instructive parallel to the altar of burnt offering and the table of showbread in the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel.

⁸⁵ Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, pp. 333-334 with footnote.

⁸⁶ K.C. Wu, *The Chinese Heritage*, p. 163-4

⁸⁷ Legge, *Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, pp. 62, 68, 237, 370, etc.

perfect and final sacrifice. So these temporary animal sacrifices were intended to be educational and teach the essential lessons of substitutionary sacrifice to the emperor as well as all of China. If they learned the lessons well, they would recognize the final perfect sacrifice once Shang Di revealed it (Heb. 1:1-4; 10:1-23).

Corruptions During the Eastern Chou Period (770 to 256 B.C.)

This time in history gets its name from the fact that the capital of the Chou Dynasty was moved eastward to Luoyang (洛陽). This marked the beginning of the period of struggle for supremacy between the great states and feudal lords, known as the Spring and Autumn period (春秋時代). This period lasted from 770 to 476 B.C. It is followed by the Warring States (戰國) period which lasted from 475 to 221 B.C. when the Qin Dynasty (秦朝) was founded.⁸⁸ Until the Eastern Chou period, we are dealing with a unified religion in which royal sacrifices were of primary importance. A serious breakdown in the preservation of the ceremonies begins with the Eastern Chou. Many new theories of religion came into play that had not existed in earlier times.⁸⁹

The *Li Ji* pinpoints the first symptoms of decline with I (夷王), the ninth emperor of the Chou dynasty (894 - 879 B.C.).⁹⁰ Confucius mentions the kings Li (厲王 878 - 828 B.C.) and Yu (幽王 781 - 771 B.C.) as also corrupting the ways of Chou.⁹¹ In the following centuries there was a great falling away from the one true God, Shang Di.

Further Corruptions from Chin to the end of Yuan Dynasty (255 B.C. to 1368 A.D.)

⁸⁸ Qin, used to be phoneticised Chin, from which the name China in English originates.

⁸⁹ Bilsky, *The State Religion of Ancient China*, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs: vol. 70-71 (Taipei, Taiwan: 1975), 103.

Lester James Bilsky's book is an excellent resource for learning how the original worship of Heaven was corrupted during the late Zhou and Han dynasties. History as well as Sacred Scripture teaches that religion does not evolve to higher more noble forms, but tends to de-volve into more corrupt and idolatrous forms (Rom. 1:19-23). Thus times of spiritual revival are constantly needed to preserve the original simplicity, purity, and purpose of worshipping God.

⁹⁰ Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, p. 421.

⁹¹ Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, p. 372.

How the Sacrificial Blood Lost Some of Its Prominence

One of the major changes that occurred during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 221 A.D.) that distinguished the religious rites from earlier times "was the fact that the victim was killed before the arrival of the emperor. Thus, the shedding of the victim's blood was no longer a significant aspect of the rites. The profound impact of the substitutionary sacrifice was dispensed with in favor of maintaining the dignity of the emperor's political position."⁹² Offering sacrifice was a very bloody experience. The worshippers no doubt got sprinkled by the blood.⁹³

From the time of Chin (255 B.C.) to the beginning of Ming Dynasty (1368 A.D.), there was widespread corruption of both the knowledge and worship of the one true God Shang Di. During this turbulent political and social time, many superstitions, myths, fairy tales, and historical distortions found their origins. Many metaphysical and philosophical speculations of men led to the formation of new worldviews. This resulted in the people departing further and further away from their original belief in Shang Di. For this reason, we forgo a detailed discussion of this time in History. For those interested in the subject, there is a brief discussion concerning this corruption in the second booklet of this series, "Who is Shang Di."⁹⁴

The Symbolism of Blood Covenant and Sacrifice Was Providentially Preserved in the Sacrificial Ceremony of the Temple of Heaven

When the Ming Dynasty came to power (1368 A.D.), they had a strong desire to research out and return to their ancient religious roots in Shang Di. Thus, they built the Temple of Heaven based on the original worship

⁹² Bilsky, *The State Religion of Ancient China*, p. 269. To offer sacrifice used to be a very bloody experience. The sacrificer would be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. See Legge, *Li Ki*, Vol. 27, p. 411-412.

⁹³ Legge, *Li Ki*, Vol. XXVII, 411,412.

The Priests in Israel were also sprinkled with the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice (Ex. 29:20-21; Lev. 8:23-24). The *Li Chi* explains that the original bloodiness of the sacrificial procedure is one proof it didn't originate with man, because it goes against human feeling. (James Legge, *Li Ki*, vol. 27, p. 406 with footnote).

⁹⁴ Search on the Web at: www.shangti-research.org

of Shang Di as it had been practiced during the Hsia, Shang, and Chou Dynasties. When the Qing Dynasty came to power, they left the worship of Shang Di virtually unchanged from the Ming. It still stands today a glorious monument to the fact that Shang Di never left himself without a witness in China's long history (Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31)!

Thus, by studying the Ming and Qing sacrificial ceremonies, we can learn some of the important lessons Shang Di originally intended to teach China through the sacrificial ceremonies at the Temple of Heaven. But first, we must add to our understanding of the meaning and important spiritual principles of blood covenant as we find them in cultures around the world.

BLOOD COVENANTS AND SACRIFICES AS FOUND AROUND THE WORLD AND THROUGHOUT HISTORY

H. Clay Trumbull, in *The Blood Covenant*, documents proof of the independent existence of this rite of blood covenant in Asia, Africa, Europe, America, the Islands of the Sea, and among the five major divisions of the human family: Caucasian, Mongolian, African, Malay, and American. These all point to a common origin of its various manifestations.⁹⁵ The common origin could be traced back to special revelation granted to mankind at the dawn of history (Heb. 1:1-2; Gen. 11; Jude 14 with Gen. 5:18-24; 20:3-7). Some of this ancient knowledge would have been handed down, with varying degrees of corruption, from the “ancient patriarchs of culture” through Noah and others.⁹⁶ Or, it could be explained as a result of God’s **general revelation** to all mankind. The one true supreme God has revealed Himself to every one. His moral demands have been revealed through our **conscience**. His eternal attributes have been revealed in His **Creation** and His righteous **control of history**.

⁹⁵ H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, 1893 (reprint: James Family Christian Pub., Minneapolis, n.d.). 57, 206, 210

Trumbull's book is a classic on this subject and is recommended reading for anyone who wants to do further research on blood covenants.

⁹⁶ This can explain why it is possible to find key stories from the first eleven chapters of Genesis in Chinese characters! This has been well researched and documented in two books: C.H. Kang and Ethel R. Nelson, *The Discovery of Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1979) and Ethel R. Nelson, *The Mystery Confucius Couldn't Solve*. This would also explain why we find similar stories of a global flood in cultures around the world.

No matter the origin, the fact of the universal practice of blood sacrifice remains a well documented reality. To help us fully grasp the underlying truths common to blood covenants in China and the rest of the world, we give here a very brief summary of blood covenant around the world following the same outline we used for China. Though the specific details differ from one society to another, Trumbull documents the basic underlying principles common to almost all of them.

The parallels between blood covenants in China and the rest of the world greatly adds to our understanding of God's purpose and procedure for making Blood Covenant. Understanding the purpose and procedure enables us to enter into a Blood Covenant relationship with God!

All the references that follow refer to the pages in Trumbull's classic work, *The Blood Covenant*.

FIVE PURPOSES FOR MAKING BLOOD COVENANTS **AS FOUND IN CULTURES WORLDWIDE**

1. Around the world, we find covenants could establish peace between enemies and bring reconciliation.

In Israel, "the aim of all the sacrifices was a restored communion with God; and the hope which runs through them all is of a divine-human inter union through blood." (p. 247)

In Africa, "blood brotherhood was considered as a pledge of good-will and peace." (p. 22) Henry M. Stanley describes an incident that occurred when his group was passing through a region of cannibals in Africa. They entered into a covenant of "blood brotherhood" with a tribe that was threatening to attack them. After making the covenant, "news then spread quickly along the whole length of the island that we were friends, and as we resumed our journey, crowds from the shore cried out to us, 'Mwende Ki-vuke-vuke' (Go in peace!)" (p. 22-23). Entering into blood covenant with a King or Tribe "put an end to all danger of conflict between them." (p. 30)

2. Around the world, we find covenants united armies for war or defense

Many missionaries have documented the ceremony of blood covenant among the Karen tribe of Burma. "There are three methods of making brotherhood, or truce, between members of one tribe and those of

another. The first is the common method of eating together. This has little binding force and lasts for a limited time. The second method is that of planting a tree. The tree is planted with certain ceremonies, and [people] covenant with each other to keep peace so long as the tree lives. This covenant is regarded as of greater force than those secured by a meal. The third method is that of the blood-covenant, properly so called. In this covenant the chief stands as the representative of the tribe, if it be a tribal agreement; or the father as the representative of the family, if it be a more limited covenant. The ceremonies are public and solemn. The most important act is the mingling of the blood. Blood is drawn from the thigh of each of the covenanting parties and mingled together. Then each dips his finger into the blood and applies it to his lips. In some cases, it is said that the blood is actually drunk; but the more common method is that of touching the lips with the blood stained finger. This covenant is of the utmost force. It covers not merely an agreement of peace, but also a promise of mutual assistance in peace and in war. I have never heard of the blood covenant being broken. An appeal for help on the basis of the blood covenant is never disregarded." (p. 313-314; also p. 16, 28)

3. Around the world, we find covenants guaranteed the protection of the weaker party

Some missionaries visiting the Dayaks of Borneo in the 1800's tell of the kindly greeting given to them at a place called Golong. They said that the natives wished:

"to establish a fraternal agreement with the missionaries, on condition that the latter should teach them the ways of God. The travelers replied that if the Dayaks became the Disciples of Christ, they would be constituted the brethren of Christ without any formal compact. The Dayaks, however, insisted that the travelers should enter into a compact [with them], according to the custom of the country, by means of blood. The missionaries were startled at this, thinking, that the Dayaks meant to murder them, and committed themselves to their Heavenly Father, praying. . . It appears, however, that it is the custom of the Dayaks, when they enter into a covenant, to draw a little blood from the arms of the covenanting parties, and, having mixed it with water, each to drink, in this way, the blood of the other."

". . .having consented to the ceremony, they all took off their coats, and two officers came forward with small knives, to take a little blood out of the arm of each of them [the two missionaries and two Dayak chiefs].

This being mixed together in four glasses of water, they drank, severally, each from the glass of the other; after which they joined hands and kissed. The people then came forward, and made obeisance [bowed] to the missionaries, as the friends of the Dayak King, crying out with loud voices, 'Let us be friends and brethren forever; and may God help the Dayaks to obtain the knowledge of God from the missionaries!' The two chiefs then said, 'Brethren, be not afraid to dwell with us; for we will do you no harm; and if others wish to hurt you, we will defend you with our life's blood, and die ourselves ere you be slain. God be witness, and this whole assembly be witness, that this is true.' Whereupon the whole company shouted, Balaak! or 'Good', 'Be it so.'" (p. 49-50)

There was an example of this aspect of blood covenant found in ancient Egypt. A surgeon named Nebsecht saved the life of a woman named Uarda. Her soldier-father, named Kaschta, wanted to show his gratitude and pledge his life-long fidelity in return. Kaschta says, "If at any time thou dost want help, call me, and I will protect thee against twenty enemies. Thou hast saved my child – good! Life for life. I sign myself thy blood-ally - there!" "With these words he drew his poniard {small sword} out of his girdle. He scratched his arm, and let a few drops of his blood run down on a stone at the feet of Nebsecht. 'Look!' he said. 'There is my blood! Kaschata has signed himself thine; and thou canst dispose of my life as of thine own. What I have said, I have said.'" ⁹⁷

Dr. Livingstone mentioned that in Africa, once two parties had entered into blood covenant, they "were bound to disclose to each other any impending evil" and help them escape.⁹⁸

4. Around the world, we find covenants established strong friendship

The adventurous Henry M. Stanley, in his search for David Livingstone in the wilds of Africa in the 1870's and 1880's, reported many instances of "blood brotherhood" or "strong friendship." (p. 18)

On one occasion, he made a blood covenant with the senior chief, named Mata Bwyki of the Ashantees.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Trumbull, p. 84 (see also p. 297-298). The facts of blood covenant in this story were recorded in the form a historical novel based on true facts as found in archaeological finds in Egypt. The historical novel *Uarda* by Georg Ebers can be found on the web through The Project Gutenberg.

⁹⁸ Trumbull, p. 14

Previously, Stanley and the Ashantees had fought fiercely against each other in 1877. But in 1883, they entered into blood covenant with each other. He describes the ceremony this way: "A forked palm branch was brought. Mata Bwyki's heir, Kokoro, came forward, seized it, and kneeled before Stanley. He grabbed one of the forks and told Stanley to hold the other branch. Kokoro lifted his hand and cleaved the branch in two and said, 'Thus I declare my wish to be your brother.' Then a man came forward with his lancets, long pod, pinch of salt, and fresh green banana leaf. He held the staff of Kokoro's sword bladed spear, while one of my rifles was brought forth. The shaft of the spear and the stock of the rifle were then scraped on the leaf, a pinch of salt was dropped on the wood, and finally a little dust from the long pod was scraped on the curious mixture. Then our arms were crossed, - the white arm over the brown arm, - and an incision was made in each; and over the blood was dropped a few grains of the dusty compound; and the white arm was rubbed over the brown arm [in the intermingling of blood]."

Then Mata Bwyki arose and made a loud pronouncement of the oath. He said, "People of Iboko! You see Tandelay (Stanley) before you. His other name is Bula Matari. He has asked Mata Bwyki to be his friend. Mata Bwyki has taken him by the hand, and has become his blood-brother. Tandelay belongs to Iboko now. He has become this day one of the Bangala (Ashantees). Bula Matari and Mata Bwyki are one today. We have joined hands. Hurt not Bula Matari's people; steal not from them; offend them not. Bring food and sell to him at a fair price, gently, kindly, and in peace; for he is my brother." The multitude shouted, "We hear, Mata Bwyki!" and the ceremony was ended. (p. 35-37) Examples of this are documented in China (43-44), Madagascar (p. 44-45), the Malay Archipelago, including the Malays, Papuan and Polynesian races (p. 53-54), and North and South America (p. 54-56).

This unity of two individuals through the blood covenant is beautifully captured in the closing words of a covenant oath from Madagascar: "These are our last words, We will be like rice and water; in town they do not separate, and in the fields they do not forsake one another; we will be as the right and left hand of the body; if one be injured, the other necessarily sympathizes and suffers with it." (Trumbull p. 48)

⁹⁹ Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* 2 Vol., Vol. 2, 297-302

5. Around the world, we find covenants could not be broken without serious consequences. The one true supreme God or other supernatural spirits or divinities would hold the covenanting parties responsible for keeping their covenant commitment.

One time, Stanly and Itsi (also known as Ngalyema) experienced some trouble in their relationship. Stanley “suggested that perhaps it would be better to cancel their brotherhood. ‘No, no, no,’ cried Ngalyema, anxiously; ‘our brotherhood cannot be broken; our blood is now one.’” This, despite the fact, that at this time Stanley’s brotherhood with Ngalyema was only by the blood of his deceased substitute, Frank Pocock. (p. 28) Stanley tells us that when he renewed the covenant with Ngalyema himself with his own blood, that Ngalyema’s representative “pronounced an inconceivable number of curses on my head if ever I proved false. Susi (Stanley’s representative), not to be outdone by him, solicited the gods to visit unheard of atrocious vengeance on Ngalyema if he dared to make the slightest breach in the sacred brotherhood which made him and Bula Matari (Stanley) one and indivisible for ever.” (p. 30-31)

Tacitus, an ancient Roman historian, describes certain instances of blood covenant among the Armenians which ended by confessing “the gods being witnesses.” He goes on to explain: “It is the custom of Oriental kings, as often as they come together to make covenant, to join right hands, to tie the thumbs together, and to tighten them with a knot. Then, when the blood is thus pressed to the finger tips, they draw blood by a light stroke, and lick it in turn. This they regard as a divine covenant made sacred as it were, by mutual blood or blended lives.” (p. 59-60)

The ancient Historian, Herodotus, documents this fact among the ancient Scythians. (p. 61-63)

**SEVEN PROCEDURES OF BLOOD COVENANT AS
DISCOVERED AROUND THE WORLD**

1. Blood covenant required shedding the blood of an innocent perfect (without blemish) substitute

In our discussion of the 5 purposes for cutting blood covenants, we have already given many examples of shedding blood. We also gave many examples in our discussion under China, so we will not list any more examples here. It appears that covenants between man and God almost always required the shed blood of a substitutionary sacrifice.

Covenant between people often just required a little blood from each of the covenanting parties, or one of their covenant substitutes.

2. The oath of a covenant involved a blessing and/or a curse

Trumbull documents a detailed oath from a blood covenant ceremony of Madagascar. The covenanting parties declared, “Should either of us prove disloyal to the sovereign, or unfaithful to each other, then perish the day, and perish night. Awful is that, solemn is that, which we are now both about to perform! . . . And should either of us retract from the terms of this oath, let him instantly become a fool, let him instantly become blind, let this covenant prove a curse to him: let him not be a human being: let there be no heir to inherit after him. . .” (p. 44-47)

3. Giving gifts was an important part of blood covenant - you exchange clothes, armor, or other gifts.

The exchanging of gifts is well documented in blood covenants all across Africa. Dr. Livingstone, the great missionary pioneer in Africa, called the blood covenant rite *Kasendi*. “Describing the ceremony Livingstone says: The hands of the parties are joined. Small incisions are made on the clasped hands, on the pits of the stomach, and on the right cheeks and foreheads. A small quantity of blood is taken off from these points, in both parties, by means of a stalk of grass. The blood from one person is put into a pot of beer, and that of the second into another; each then drinks the other’s blood. . . The principals [Main people involved] in the performance of ‘*Kasendi*’ are henceforth considered blood relations, and are bound to disclose to each other any impending evil. When the ceremony concluded they presented each other with the most valuable presents they had to bestow.” (p. 14; see also p. 16, 25, 31-32)

The Native Americans “confirmed and signalized a formal covenant, or a treaty, with the exchange of belts of wampum; and these wampum belts were not merely conventional gifts, but were actual records, tokens, and reminders, of the covenant itself.” (p. 326-328)

4. A sign or memorial of the covenant was established.

As stated above under giving gifts, the Native American tribes exchanged belts of wampum that were both a gift and a sign, or reminder of the covenant. “The belts were an encircling and binding token of a covenant.” (p. 327) “As the belts commonly signalized tribal covenant,

they were not worn by a single individual, but were sacredly guarded in some tribal depository.” (p. 328)

Among the peoples of the Malay Archipelago (Malays, Papuan, Polynesian) “the ceremony of blood brotherhood or the swearing of eternal friendship” was common. “The ceremony is the same in substance whether between two individuals, or between large companies. The contracting parties slash their arms, and collect the blood into a bamboo into which gin ...or palm wine is poured.” They then collect a small fig-tree, sword and spear from the sacred room of their own houses (or sacred building of the village if the covenant is between large groups of people). They go to some isolated spot and plant the fig tree, “flanked by the sacred sword and spear.” There they each take a drink of the mixture pledging their loyalty to each other and hang on the tree a bamboo receptacle, into which the remainder of the mixture is poured. “Then each swears, ‘If I be false, and be not a true friend, may my blood issue from my mouth, ears, nose, as it does from this bamboo!’ – the bottom of the receptacle being pricked at the same moment to allow the blood and wine to escape. The blood stained tree remains and grows as a witness of their contract.” (p. 53) ¹⁰⁰

5. Blood covenant established a strong bond of fellowship around the covenant meal

Trumbull has an extensive discussion on the importance of the blood in sacrifice worldwide throughout history (p. 147-190). The sacrifice was often partaken of in a covenant meal that followed the shedding of the sacrificial blood. Often, there was the idea “of divine human inter-union through blood, and of divine-human inter-communion through sharing the flesh of the accepted sacrifice, at the altar, or at the table...” (p. 169) We find the interchanged use of the words “altar” (for sacrifice) and “table” (for communion) in Scripture (Mal. 1:6; Isa. 65:11). Thus, “the animals offered in sacrifice are always those animals which are suitable for eating, whether their eating is allowed at other times than when sacrificed or not. That which is good for food is good for sacrifice. The blood gave common life; the flesh gave common nourishment.” (p. 181-182) This association of sacrificing and feasting is universal. The blood makes unity and eating shows union. (p. 350-355)

¹⁰⁰ For other references that mention signs or reminders of the covenant see Trumbull pages 326-331; trees - page 53, 165, 316-17; seven stones - page 62, 265-6; bracelet or ring – page 65-76.

6. Covenanting parties receive a new covenant name symbolical of becoming a new person

Trumbull documented mankind's attempt for union with the divine through blood sacrifice in India, China, Persia, Peru, and Tahiti. There seem to be gleams of this truth in the almost universal habit, on the part of worshippers, of taking the name of a divinity as a portion of one's own name; thereby claiming a right to be counted as in family oneness with the object of one's sacrificial worship. (p. 356)

“An exchange of names, as if in exchange of personalities, is connected with a covenant of friendship in widely diverse countries.” One example is the Araucanians of South America. There “the custom of making brothers, or brother-friends, is called *Lacu*. It includes the killing of a lamb and dividing it –cutting it – between the two covenanting parties; and each party must eat his half of the lamb – either by himself or by such assistance as he chooses to call in. None of it can be left uneaten. Gifts also pass between the parties; and the two friends exchange names. The giving {exchanging} of a name establishes between the namesakes a species of relationship which is considered almost as sacred as that of blood, and obliges them to render to each other certain services, and that consideration which naturally belongs to relatives.” (p. 334; also 335-336)

7. Each new generation must personally enter into the covenant once it has been established by the forefathers

Henry M. Stanley describes how again and again, he entered “into the covenant of blood brotherhood with representative Africans; in some instances by the opening of his own veins; at other times by allowing one of his personal escort to bleed for him.” (p. 20) On one occasion, “Frank Pocock [an attendant of Stanley] and the chief of Kampunzu went through the ordeal; and we interchanged presents – as is the custom in the observance of this rite.” (p. 22) Frank Pocock also cut the covenant with a King named Itsi which involved the exchange of gifts. In this ceremony, “a small scratch in Frank's arm, and another in Itsi's arm, supplied blood sufficient to unite us in one, and by an indivisible bond of fraternity.” (p. 25-26) Four years later, Itsi had become a great man and ruled a large area in the Upper Congo. Stanley found himself in a dangerous and difficult situation in Itsi's realm. He describes the powerful effect of the blood covenant made years before. “The tie of blood-covenanting was the strongest tie known in Central Africa. Frank Pocock, whose covenant blood flowed in Itsi's veins, was dead; yet for his sake his master, Stanley,

was welcomed by Itsi as a brother . . . and was invited to prove anew his continuing faith by a fresh series of love showing gifts.” (p. 27) At this time, Itsi surrendered to Stanly his scepter, which was to be carried by him to show to all men that he was the brother of Itsi. Stanley’s relationship with Itsi experienced several severe strains over the years. Finally, “it was urgently pressed on Stanley by the chiefs of Kintamo, that he should personally covenant by blood with Ngalyema (Itsi), and so put an end to all danger of conflict between them.” (p. 30)

Now we must continue our study by learning the eternal purpose and important spiritual principles of blood covenant as it is revealed in the Bible. The Bible is the only book that Shang Di has supernaturally inspired through His Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17). You will be amazed by what you learn from God's book. Now, we can compare the Bible's teachings with the lessons Shang Di was teaching China in the Temple of Heaven with the lessons He was teaching other nations in their blood covenant ceremonies around the world. When we do, it becomes clear they all had to have one original source in the same sovereign God. And because Shang Di has preserved the Bible without letting man corrupt it (Ps. 12:6-7; Matt. 5:18), we can use its teaching to identify what was God’s original intended spiritual meaning in the worship at the Temple of Heaven. We are about to learn some very exciting truth!

SHANG DI HAS REVEALED THE TRUE PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES OF BLOOD COVENANT IN HIS HOLY WORD

The Holy Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. Literally, they can be called the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-33; 32:40; Heb. 8:6-13; 12:24; Gal. 4:24). If the Bible is divided according to two covenants, it is self evident that learning about covenants and how it relates to mankind is foundational to understanding God's book. In fact, without an understanding of blood covenants, it would almost be impossible to fully comprehend or experience the full depth, loving intimacy, and life changing nature of our relationship with God.

Definition of the Word for Covenant in the Bible

The etymology of the Hebrew word for covenant (*berith*) is uncertain. It may be from *barah* meaning, “to eat.” A key part of making a covenant was to eat a meal together. The word for covenant may be from *birtu* meaning, “to fetter or to bind.” A covenant was a binding of

two or more parties. The word for covenant could also be from *berit* meaning, “between.” A covenant was a binding agreement between two or more parties. The word covenant frequently appears with the verb “to cut” in the Bible. A blood covenant was literally cut as an animal was killed with a sword or knife. It is translated “to make a covenant” in the Bible, but literally means, “to cut a covenant”(Gen. 21:27; 26:28; I Sam. 18:3; and so on). When Jesus Christ died on the cross, a new everlasting covenant was literally cut between almighty God and mankind (John 19:34; Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40-42; 34:18). Accepting Christ's sacrifice for our sins binds us in the most intimate relationship with God a person can possibly have.

There is no single place in the Bible where the whole ceremony of blood covenant is fully explained. The meaning and procedure were universally understood so no explanation was necessary. However, we can piece together the whole picture by studying the different covenants recorded in the Bible.

We will list the Old Testament purpose and procedure of blood covenant in the same outline format we used for China. This will enable you to see the amazing parallels between the two. We then explain how the symbolism and ceremonial details in these covenants find their ultimate and eternal fulfillment as recorded in the New Testament. The Bible tells us God gave Jesus to mankind for a covenant of the people (Isa. 49:8-12). Christ fulfills every purpose and procedure of the great blood covenants God made with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Understanding them can truly change our life.

FIVE PURPOSES OF BLOOD COVENANT AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

1. In the Bible, covenants established peace between enemies

Old Testament examples: The covenant between Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31:44-54 was a mutual non-aggression pact. There was sacrifice (vs. 54), an oath, or words, of the covenant (vs. 49-52), a covenant meal (vs. 54), and God was called on as a witness to the covenant commitment (vs. 49, 53).

Final New Testament fulfillment: The Bible teaches us that through the new eternal covenant cut on the cross, "Shang Di hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). Shang Di wants every one to worship and

fellowship with him through the eternal Son of Heaven, Jesus Christ! "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:8, 10). "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:13, 14, 18).

2. In the Bible, covenants united armies for war or defense

Old Testament examples: Covenant friends would come to each other's defense if one of them was attacked. This is what Jonathan was symbolically saying to David when he gave David his sword and bow when they cut their blood covenant (I Sam. 18:3-4, about 1060 B.C.).

When we enter into a blood covenant relationship with God, He promises to be our shield (protector - Gen. 15:1). In the Old Testament, when Israel lived up to her blood covenant responsibilities with Jehovah, God himself came to Israel's defense when she was attacked by powerful enemies (Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20; Uzziah in 2 Chron. 26:5-8; Hezekiah in 2 Chron. 32:15-22). Likewise, when a king worshipped idols, God would deliver him into the hands of his enemies (Ahaz - 2 Chron. 28:1-5). A sovereign righteous God controls history (Rom. 1:18).

Final New Testament fulfillment: In Christ, God has made his entire spiritual armor available to the Christian believer (Eph. 6:11). He has given us spiritual "weapons, that are mighty through God for pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). Thus we can win our battles with Satan and demons (Eph. 6:12-13). We can overcome the devil "through the blood of the Lamb," - Jesus Christ (John 1:29; Rev. 12:9-12). That is the blood of the everlasting covenant that guarantees our eternal life in heaven (Heb. 13:20).

3. In the Bible, covenants guaranteed the protection of the weaker party

Old Testament example: The Gibeonites cut a covenant with Joshua because they were the weaker nation and wanted protection (Josh. 9:1-20). Later they came under military attack from a coalition of five kings (Josh. 10:1-4). Even though Israel had been deceived into cutting a blood covenant with the Gibeonites, they were still obligated to come to their defense (Josh. 10:6-10). This was around 1400 B.C.

Final New Testament fulfillment: God was in Christ cutting the new covenant with humanity by his sacrifice on the cross (I Cor. 11:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:19) to protect us from all our spiritual enemies. In making a blood covenant with people, it is God, as sovereign, who initiates the covenant. This is because "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. 7:7).

As human beings, we all have many weaknesses. It is to our present and eternal advantage to enter into a blood covenant relationship with Shang Di. We can then "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). We will be protected from powerful evil spirits (Rev. 12:9-12). We need not fear the spirits of angry ancestors or anything else once almighty God is our protector (Gen. 15:1)! "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1)

4. In the Bible, covenants established strong friendship

Old Testament example: The covenant of David with Jonathan in I Samuel 18:1-4 (with 1 Sam. 20:8-23) was a friendship covenant that would extend to their descendants forever (1 Sam. 20:15).

The highest use of blood covenant is to establish an eternal friendship with almighty God. Abraham entered into a blood covenant relationship with God through blood sacrifice by offering a "heifer, a goat, a ram, and other animals" (Gen. 15:1-18). Abraham is then called the friend of God (Jas. 2:23; Isa. 41:8)! Hezekiah also entered into a covenant of friendship with God (2 Chron. 29:10).

In 878 B.C. when Jehoiada and Israel made a covenant with the LORD to be the LORD'S people, they broke down the idol altars and idol images (2 Kings 11:17-18). King Asa did the same in 950 B.C. (2 Chronicles 15:8, 12-15).¹⁰¹

Final New Testament fulfillment: When we enter into a blood covenant relationship with God to become His friend (John 15:14-15), we must give up all our associations with idols. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them. . . and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a

¹⁰¹ Dr. Sun Yat-Sen also broke some idols when he made his decision to forsake superstition and idolatry so he could worship the one true God, Shang Di

Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:16 to 7:1).

5. In the Bible, covenants could not be broken without serious consequences

Old Testament example: Even though the Gibeonites had deceived Israel into making a covenant, Israel could not violate the oath of the covenant once it was made. Joshua said, "We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. . . lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them" (See Joshua 9:3-9, 14-20, especially verses 19 and 20). A deadly curse came upon the house of Saul because he violated this covenant with the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:1-7). A sovereign righteous God controls history.

Marriage is considered a blood covenant relationship by God who designed human anatomy so that covenant blood could be shed when the marriage is consummated (Mal. 2:14). To break that covenant by unfaithfulness brings serious consequences, especially to your financial well being (Mal. 2:13-16). We also must "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12-13).

Final New Testament fulfillment: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: O how much sorer punishment, . . . shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:28-31; 6:4-6; 2:1-2). Shang Di and the God of the Bible are one and the same true God, and He will hold everyone accountable for keeping their word (Num. 30:2; Matt. 12:36-37).

SEVEN PROCEDURES OF BLOOD COVENANT AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

1. Blood covenant required shedding the blood of an innocent perfect substitute

Old Testament example: Blood covenanting always involved sacrificing an innocent animal. Sometimes the victim was split in half lengthwise, and a corridor was formed between the halves. The covenanting parties would then walk through the corridor together in

a figure eight pattern and meet in the middle to take the oath. This appears to be the case in Genesis 15:10, 17 and Jeremiah 34:18.

The Bible makes it clear that blood represents life: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11, 14). And as all the sacrifices had to be perfect (without blemish) both internally and externally, the blood must represent a perfect life! (Lev. 1:3, 6-10; Num. 6:14; Ex. 12:5)

Final New Testament fulfillment: The shed blood of Jesus represented His perfect life offered up to God on our behalf! (I Pet. 1:19) "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience...?" (Heb. 9:14)

The blood was considered sacred. So it must be treated with reverence (Lev. 17:11-14; Acts. 15:20; Heb. 10:29).

Final New Testament fulfillment: Jesus' blood was sacred because His blood was the blood of God come in human flesh (Acts 20:28 KJV; Heb. 10:29-30). It is the most precious thing in the world because it is valuable enough to redeem us from all our sins (John 1:29; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:9-10).

The sacrifices at the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel provided a temporary access to, and reconciliation with, God. But the blood of Jesus Christ has provided a permanent access (reconciliation) with God. Jesus died on the cross to redeem us "with His own precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:19; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 2:13-14).

2. The oath of a covenant involved a blessing and a curse

Old Testament example: The covenanting parties would meet in the middle of the parted sacrifice and raise their hands to heaven and clasp them together as they proclaimed the oath of the covenant. This could include a curse as it related to the killing of the sacrificial victim, or a blessing proclaiming the benefits and purpose of the covenant. (See Genesis 15:6-18; 21:23-27; 22:16-18) Israel would be cursed if she broke her blood covenant with God (read Deuteronomy 27:5-26; 28:15-45). Israel would receive incredible blessings if they would faithfully keep their covenant promise to God (Deut. 28:1-14).

Trumbull gives documentation for the idea that the handshake binding a man to his word originally came from the binding power of blood covenant oaths.

God uses this same metaphor of Himself when He wants to express the binding power of His covenant with Israel. The Bible says, "The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength. . ." (Isa. 62:8) One of the words translated "swear" in Scripture means literally "to lift up [the hand]" (Hebrew = *nasa* [*yad*]). This term is used of God in Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; and of man in Isaiah 3:7.

Final New Testament fulfillment: The blessing and the curse are clearly revealed in the New Covenant that God made with mankind when Christ died on the cross for our sin. John 3:16-18 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Only Jesus can save us from the curse of breaking God's law (Gal. 3:13; Matt. 25:41-46).

3. Giving gifts was an important part of blood covenant - you exchange clothes, armor, or other gifts

Old Testament example: Often, there would be an exchange of clothes, armor, or other gifts by the covenanting parties (Gen. 21:27; 24:42-58; Isa. 49:18; 61:10). In exchanging military attire, they were pledging their armies or military strength to each other. This would be Abraham's understanding when God told him, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). What great peace a man can have when he has entered into a blood covenant relationship with the one true almighty God!

Final New Testament fulfillment: Scripture also tells us that after Jesus cut the new covenant on the cross, "He ascended up on high and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). The Scriptures are full of military metaphors from blood covenants. As new covenant believers, we are told to "put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12). Because of the reality of the spiritual warfare surrounding us, we are warned to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11). Christians in blood covenant relationship with God have protection from evil spirits.

The exchange of non-military garments was a powerful metaphor to convey spiritual truth. We are encouraged to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22,24; Col. 3:9-10). We must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14; Isa. 61:10).

4. A sign or memorial of the covenant was established

Old Testament example: Often, a special sign was designated by which people would constantly be reminded of their special covenant relationship. Sometimes, a tree or trees were planted as a memorial of a covenant (Gen. 21:27, 33). In one of Abraham's covenants, seven ewe lambs were set apart as 'a witness' to the covenant transaction (Gen. 21:30). In Abraham's covenant with God the sign was circumcision (Gen. 17:10-11, 13). In the case of Jacob and Laban, a heap of stones became the "heap of witness" to the covenant (Gen. 31:44-48).

Final New Testament fulfillment: The sign of the New Covenant is the spiritual fulfillment of Old Testament circumcision. It is "the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11; Rom. 2:29). The cross is also a universally recognized sign of the Christian's blood covenant relationship with God (Gal. 6:12, 14). Baptism is also a public demonstration that one has entered into a blood covenant relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27).

5. Blood covenant established a strong bond of fellowship around the covenant meal

Old Testament example: A fellowship meal was an important part of covenants in the Bible (Gen. 26:26-31; 31:44-54). Isaac and Abimelech (Gen. 26:26-30), and Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:54), shared a feast when they cut their covenants with each other. When the covenant of Sinai was ratified between God and the people of Israel, the elders and Moses went up the mountain and had a covenant meal in the presence of God (Ex. 24:1-11 especially verses 8-11)! The one true God wants to feast with his people (Rev. 3:20; Isa. 25:6; Deut. 14:23).

Final New Testament fulfillment: We know from God's special revelation in Scripture that Jesus Christ is the spiritual fulfillment of the

bread and wine of the covenant meal (John 6:32-35). Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper to symbolize our spiritual union with Him. The bread is the symbol of his body and the cup contains the symbol of his blood (Matt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-5).

Maintaining the proper etiquette at the feast of the Lord's Table is just as important as it was at the feast in the Temple of Heaven. For God tells us, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (I Cor. 11:27, 29).

The wedding ceremony is arranged according to the procedures of cutting a blood covenant. The feast after the ceremony is a blood covenant meal. Marriage is a blood covenant in God's eyes (Mal. 2:14). It is a picture of the day when Christians (the Bride) will partake of the wedding feast of the Lamb with Jesus as the groom (Rev. 19:7-10; Eph. 5:25-32).

6. Covenanting parties receive a new covenant name symbolical of becoming a new person

Old Testament example: Sometimes people would be given a new covenant name after cutting a blood covenant. This is very common in marriage covenants where the wife usually takes a new name from the husband. God gave both Abram and Sarai new covenant names when He entered into a blood covenant relationship with them. Abram, meaning "exalted father," became Abraham meaning, "father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5). God changed Sarai's name to Sarah (Gen. 17:15). Jehovah God was actually adding a part of his name ("ah" from Jehovahah) to each of theirs. You can observe this even in the English spelling: Sarah and Abraham. Many people who considered themselves to be in blood covenant relationship with Jehovah added a part of Jehovah's name into the name of their children. For example Micah means "who is like Jehovah." Zechariah means "Jehovah remembers." Joshua(h) in Hebrew means "Jehovah is salvation."

The situation is not exactly the same in ancient China, for they did not know the Creator by his personal name but by the most exalted title of Shang Di. The emperors who took part regularly in a blood covenant ceremony with Shang Di eventually had part of His title, Di, appropriated

as part of their own title. Originally, this only occurred after their death and was bestowed by men, not God himself.

Final New Testament fulfillment: Every Christian is called by the name of Christ. Taking his name is symbolic of us becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 3:18). If we have become "a new creature in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17) we must manifest the character of Christ in our daily lives (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:29).

Jesus has also promised to give each believer a new name when he comes back to set up his eternal kingdom (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). The new name will be needed to fully express the glorious new person we will become when we see Jesus face to face (I John 3:2-3).

7. Each new generation must personally enter into the covenant once it has been established by the forefathers

Old Testament example: Once a covenant was established by the forefathers, each new generation had to make the decision as to whether or not they would enter into the covenant themselves (Gen. 17:7-8). Every male was entered into the Abrahamic covenant by the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17:14). Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech in Genesis 21:22-33. Later, another Abimelech, Ahuzzath, and Phichol make (cut) a covenant with Isaac in Genesis 26:26-31. This was a renewal of Abraham's previous covenant with the first Abimelech.

There is a very important story about a young man named Mephibosheth, who almost failed to enter into the blessing of a covenant that had been established by his father with King David. Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, son of King Saul.¹⁰² He belonged to the royal line but was made a cripple by a fall (2 Sam. 4:4). Saul's entire family was under sentence of death for killing the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:1-2). But Mephibosheth is saved by the blood covenant his father had made years before (2 Sam. 21:6-7). He lived many years in fear for his life, hiding from God's chosen king because he was ignorant of this covenant. Finally, at the king's initiative, Mephibosheth was called into the king's presence, exalted to sit in a place of honor, and invited to feast at the king's table everyday (2 Sam. 9:5,7). This glorious heritage belonged to

¹⁰² The scriptures that tell the story of Mephibosheth are found in 2 Sam. 4:4; 9:1-13; 19:24-30; 21:7.

Mephibosheth because of a blood covenant that had been made by someone else (2 Sam. 9:9-11).

Final New Testament fulfillment: The spiritual truths of Mephibosheth's history can be applied to every crippled sinner that enters into a blood covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. How many of us were made a cripple by a fall into sin (Rom. 5:12)? How many of us live in fear for our lives because we are ignorant of the blood covenant Jesus cut for us on the Cross (Heb. 2:14-15; I Pet. 1:18-19)? How many of us have accepted God's invitation to sit in the highest place of honor in the universe (Eph. 2:4-7)? How many of us fail to feast at the Lord's Table because we never accepted the invitation of the King of Kings, to receive the blessings of the New Covenant (Matt. 11:28-30)?

BRINGING ALL THE TREADS OF TRUTH TOGETHER IN ONE BEAUTIFUL REDEMPTIVE TAPESTRY

The parallels between China's practice of sacrifice, blood covenants as found in cultures around the world throughout history, and God's perfect revelation of sacrifice in the Bible are absolutely incredible! Such dramatic ceremonies were used by God to teach eternal principles that eventually would lead the Chinese to find eternal life through the New Covenant Jesus Christ established by shedding His blood on the cross.

The prevailing idea in the ancient world and the Bible was that the blood represents life (Lev. 17:10-14); the giving of blood represents the giving of life; the receiving of blood represents the receiving of life; the inter-commingling of blood represents the inter-commingling of natures; and that a divine-human inter-union through blood is the basis of a divine-human inter-communion in the sharing of the flesh of the sacrificial offering as sacred food.¹⁰³

In China, as in the Bible, the symbolic ceremonies of the blood covenant pointed to the possibility of a union of a person's spiritual nature with God. Such symbols were only a "shadow of things to come" (Col. 2:17). Now a person can be united to his God only through Jesus Christ because he alone shed the blood of the new covenant on the cross. Thus, through faith in Christ alone as our LORD and Savior, we can become one

¹⁰³ Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, 209.

in Spirit with Shang Di (I Cor. 6:17). This intimate union with God is a glorious mystery (Eph. 5:30-32 KJV; Eph. 2:13, 18).

The *Li Chi* tells us: "**That which is most important in ceremonies is to understand the idea intended in them.**"¹⁰⁴

It is important for us to understand the difference between man's purposes in the sacrifices and Shang Di's purposes in them. Men throughout China's history understood the social and political reasons behind them which they deemed necessary for the harmony and preservation of society. But some ceremonies are sovereignly designed by God to teach His eternal redemptive spiritual purposes. We call these kind of ceremonies "shadows" or "types" of the greater spiritual eternal reality.

Why has there been a ceaseless repetition of sacrifice for four thousand years of history in China?

The answer is clearly explained in God's Word. God tells us they "offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, **imposed on them until the time of reformation.**" "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. 9:10-11; 10:1).

Animal sacrifices could not make any one perfect in the sight of God. If they had, they would have ceased to be offered a long time ago. But in those sacrifices we are reminded each year that sin separates us from God (Heb. 10:3; 9:22). The blood of bulls, sheep, and goats can never take away sin (Heb. 10:4). But Jesus is Shang Di's last perfect sacrifice. In Chinese we cannot be righteous (義) without the lamb (羊). There can be no true peace and happiness (祥) without this Lamb of God (上帝的羔羊).

THE DIVINE SYMBOLISM CONCEALED IN THE WORSHIP CEREMONY AT THE ALTAR OF HEAVEN

In the second booklet of this series, "Who is Shang Di," we documented from China's own Confucian Classics, ancient history, and modern dictionaries, the fact that *Shang Di* or *Tian* is without a doubt the

¹⁰⁴ Legge, *Li Ki* Book IX, Sect. II, par. 6 or page 439.

same God Christians love and worship by the names of Jehovah and Jesus. If Shang Di is the same God revealed in the Christian Bible, we would expect that he was working in ancient China by the same spiritual principles with which he was revealing his eternal purposes to Israel. And because China preserved the knowledge of blood covenant with Shang Di, through the emperor's worship at the Temple of Heaven, we can still discover many spiritual truths about eternal salvation as they were originally allowed to be designed into those ceremonies by the one true God.

Because of what we have learned about blood covenant around the world, we are now able to understand the basic spiritual message in the symbolical ceremonies of the Temple of Heaven. And because of the amazing parallels with blood covenant as it is revealed in God's Word, the Bible, we can learn exactly how the ancient symbolism and purpose is ultimately fulfilled in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

People in ancient times didn't fully understand what Shang Di was trying to teach them because it was **"not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister these things"**, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (I Pet. 1:10-12). "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant" (Psalm 25:14; Deut. 29:29).

It is beyond the scope of this booklet to present a detailed study of the emperor's worship at the Temple of Heaven. If you are interested in such study, we encourage you to look up more resources on our web site at: www.shangti-research.org

Here, we simply list the 47 steps as we recorded them from the Temple of Heaven display in 1999 along with the songs and prayers from the Ming Statutes. English translations of these resources are found in James Legge's *Notions of the Chinese Concerning Gods and Spirits*, and John Ross's *The Original Religion of China*. These resources along with others, including a detailed explanation of the New Testament truths that were hidden in the Temple of Heaven ceremonies, can be found on the web site at: www.shangti-research.org.

THE GREAT SACRIFICE PROCEDURES

天壇祭天儀程

PREPARATIONS (This includes Steps 1 thru 20)

1. Selection of sacrificial animals –

Three months before the Great Sacrifice, officials from the Department of Rites and Tai-Chang building go to the city outskirts to select sacrificial animals, such as ox.

2. *Practice of music and dance* -

Forty days before the sacrifice, dancers and ministers go to Tian-Tan's Ni-Xi Hall of the Divine Music Branch to practice their dance and walk their positions. They have joint practices on every 3, 6, and 9 numbered days.

3. *Inspection of animals* -

Five days before the sacrifice, the emperor's appointed royal prince goes to the animals' holding place to inspect them.

4. *Erection of tents and offering tables* -

Three days before the sacrifice, tents and offering tables are set up.

5. *Slaying of sacrificial animals* -

One day before the Great Sacrifice, the officers of the Hall of Sacrifice drive the sacrificial animals to the slaying pavilion. After the slaying ceremony, conducted by the official from the Department of Rites, is completed, the animals are slain.

6. *Welcoming of the Bronze Man (a small bronze statue)* -

Three days before the Great Sacrifice, the emperor begins his fast. The official from the Department of Rites sets up a Bronze Man with a fasting plate in his hand at the Hall of Fasting to remind the emperor to fast with a pure heart.

7. *Bathe and fast* -

The emperor fasts for two days at the Forbidden City, and then he fasts for one day at the Hall of Abstinence at Tian-Tan. During the fast he does not deal with criminal matters and refrains from drinking and eating of meats.

8. *Government officials joining the fast* -

Government officials fast at their various business places three days before the Sacrifice.

9. *Inspection of prayer tablets* -

Two days before the Sacrifice, the emperor inspects the prayer writings, jade offerings, and incenses at Tai-Ho Palace. Then the

Royal Ceremony Guards transport these offerings with a Dragon Carriage to store them at Tian-Tan's Divine Treasure House.

10. The Emperor leaves from Wu-Gate –

The day before the Sacrifice at 10:00 A.M., the Emperor, with his entourage, leaves the Forbidden City for Tian-Tan.

Government officials kneel and send him off at Wu-Gate.

11. The Emperor arrives at Zhao-Heng Gate -

The emperor arrives at Zhao-Heng Gate. He transports himself from the royal sedan to the ceremonial cart and goes to the Hall of Imperial Vault to worship and burn incense to Huang Tian Shang Di and ancestors.

12. Inspection of the altar and offerings -

From the Hall of Imperial Vault, the emperor moves on to the Circular Mound to inspect the positioning and display of the sacrificial offerings.

13. Inspection of sacrificial animals -

The emperor goes on to the Divine Treasury House and the Divine Kitchen to inspect the sacrificial offerings and animals.

14. The emperor arrives at Hall of Abstinence -

Having completed the inspections, the emperor arrives at the Hall of Abstinence. The officials welcome him outside the Hall.

15. Three cleansing and three bathing -

The emperor bathes himself with fragrant water and purifies his body and soul to show respect for Shang Di.

16. Government officials fast and keep watch for the emperor -

On the third day of fasting, the officials who attend the Sacrifice with the emperor find themselves dwelling places among the temples, taverns, or tents around Tian-Tan to guard the emperor.

17. Midnight lighting of lamps -

At midnight, service personnel light the sacrificial lamps.

18. Displaying of sacrificial offerings -

Service personnel bring the offerings to the Altar from the Divine Kitchen. The Welcoming spirits (*shen*) Pavilions are set on both sides of the Hall of Imperial Vault, waiting the time of Sacrifice.

19. Reporting of time -

Seven quarters before sunrise (at 4:15), an official from Tai-Chang building puts the time report in the Time Pavilion at the Hall of Abstinence, then the report is taken by the eunuch in charge to be presented to the emperor.

20. The emperor embarks -

The emperor, dressed in sacrificial robe, rides in ceremonial cart and leaves the Hall of Abstinence. He then changes to the jade carriage, with ten grand marshals leading the way, arriving at the Altar.

THE BELL IS SOUNDED IN THE HALL OF ABSTINENCE. THIS MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE GRAND CEREMONY

Steps 21 thru 43 comprise the Grand Ceremony and are divided into Nine distinct stages, or procedures.

Stage One or first procedure: steps 21 thru 30

21. Ringing the bell at Hall of Abstinence -

Once the emperor leaves the Hall of Abstinence, the bell there rings immediately to notify all service personnel to be at position for each ministry.

22. Lighting the oven fire -

At the sound of the bell, the fire overseer lights up the oven fire.

23. Sending of divine tablets -

At the sound of the bell, officials from the Department of Rites bring out the tablets for Shang-Ti and ancestors into the Welcoming spirits Pavilion, and the Royal Ceremony Guards carry the pavilions to the Altar Mound.

24. The emperor waits at the dressing canopy -

The emperor waits at the dressing canopy for the divine tablets to be set in place and the displays to be in order, and then he washes his hands in the golden basin to show cleanliness.

25. The emperor arrives at the Altar -

The emperor's worship canopy is set at the south side of the second level of the Altar; he awaits here silently for the ceremony to begin.

26. Sing praise to welcome the spirits (gods) - The First Procedure
Singing leader sings praise- "Burnt Wood Welcoming Di and spirits".

The first song, “*Zhong He- Central Peace*”, is played.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was offered:

“Of old in the beginning, there was the great chaos, without form and dark. The five elements had not begun to revolve, nor the sun and the moon to shine. In the midst thereof there existed neither form nor sound. Thou, O spiritual Sovereign, camest forth in Thy presidency, and first didst divide the grosser parts from the purer. Thou madest heaven; Thou madest earth; Thou madest man. All things with their re-producing power got their being.”¹⁰⁵

27. Presenting the ox and raising oven fire –

Fire overseer brings the whole ox to the entrance of the oven.

28. Burying of hair and blood –

The hair and blood of the sacrificial ox, offered to Shang Di, is buried under the pit.

29. Band playing Shi-Ping (2nd Song “*Yuan He- Beginning Peace*”)

Singers sing “Chapter of Shi-Ping”, the 73 member band begins to play, with chimes and drums together making majestic (loud) music.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was first recorded in the 17th year of Jia Qing (1538). *It was to announce a change in the title by which the Emperor would address Shang Di. Previously, he addressed God as “Hao Tian Shang Di” {Shang Di dwelling in the bright heavens}. From now on the Emperor would address God as “Hwang Tian Shang Di” {Shang Di dwelling in the sovereign [imperial] heavens}*

“O Di, when Thou hadst separated the Yin and the Yang {i.e. the heavens and the earth}, Thy creating work proceeded. Thou didst produce, O Spirit, the sun and the moon and the five planets, and pure and beautiful was their light. The vault of heaven was spread out like a curtain, and the square earth supported all on it, and all things were happy. I, Thy servant, venture reverently to thank Thee, and, while I worship, present the notice to Thee, O Di, calling Thee Sovereign.”

¹⁰⁵ All of the prayers from the Ming Statues are found in James Legge's, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, pp. 24-31. They are taken from *the Ming Statutes*, Vol. 82.

Also see the second booklet in this series, *Who is Shang Di?*

30. Presenting of Incense Ceremony -

The emperor goes in front of the Shang-Di seat presenting Golden Dragon incense, then three people go up with Ban incense, and then they go to the ancestors to present incense accordingly.

Stage two or second procedure: step 31-33

31. Presenting of round Heavenly Jewel (Cang-Bi) to Huang Tian Shang Di - The Second Procedure

The emperor presents the round heavenly jewel to Huang Tian Shang Di. This is a very important symbol in the Great Sacrifice

32. Presenting sacrificial silk -

The emperor then presents the sacrificial silk to the ancestors.

The third song, “*Xiu He - Resting Peace*”, is played.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was offered:

"Thou hast vouchsafed, O Di, to hear us, for Thou regardest us as a Father. I, Thy child, dull and unenlightened, am unable to show forth my dutiful feelings. I thank Thee, that Thou hast accepted the intimation. Honorable is thy great name. With reverence we spread out these gems and silks, and, as swallows rejoicing in the spring, praise thine abundant love."

33. Carrying of ox -

Before the seventh year of Emperor Qian-Long (1743), the Royal Ceremony Guard would carry the ox (calf) through a temporary erected tabernacle by the Treasury House to the Altar. This ox carrying procedure was omitted after the seventh year of Qian-Long.

Stage three or third procedure: step 34

34. Sprinkling of broth - The Third Procedure

The broth-sprinkling officer holds the broth pitcher and sprinkles hot broth over the ox so as to offer the fragrance to Shang-Ti and ancestors.

The fourth song, “*Yu He -Comforting Peace*”, is played.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was offered:

"The great feast has been set forth, and the sound of our joy is like thunder. The sovereign spirit vouchsafes to enjoy our offering, and my heart feels within me like a particle of dust. The meat has been boiled in the large caldrons, and the fragrant provisions have been prepared.

Enjoy the offering, O Di, then shall all the people have happiness. I, thy servant, receiving thy favors, am blessed indeed."

Stage four or fourth procedure: step 35 thru 36

35. *First offering of wine - The Fourth Procedure*

The cup bearer presents the ceremonial wine to the emperor, the emperor raises the wine to offer to Shang-Di, and then *Wu* or martial dance begins.

The fifth song, "*Shou He -Long Lasting Peace*", is played.

This prayer according to the Ming Statutes is:

"The great and lofty one vouchsafes his favor and regard; all unworthy are we to receive it. I, his simple servant, while I worship, hold this precious cup, and praise him, whose years have no end."

36. *Reading of prayer -*

After the wine offered to Shang-Di is laid on the offering table, music and dance stops. Then, after the reading of prayer is completed, music and dance resumes, and the emperor offers wine to the ancestors accordingly.

At this time the Reciter read a written prayer called *Zhu Wen* written on a *Zhu Ban* (prayer board). This was a lengthy prayer thanking God for His blessings of good weather, fruitful seasons, and many other blessings.

The sixth song, "*Jing He - Brilliant Peace*", is played.

The Prayer as found in the Ming statutes was:

"When Di, the Lord, had so decreed, he called into existence heaven, earth, and man. Between (heaven and earth) he separately disposed men and things, all overspread by the heavens. I, his unworthy servant, beg his (favoring) decree, to enlighten me his minister - so may I for ever appear before him in the empyrean (i.e. highest heavens)."

Stage five or fifth procedure: step 37

37. *Second offering of wine - The fifth Procedure*

The emperor makes a second presentation of ceremonial wine to Shang-Di, and then he offers it to the ancestors. A second dance troupe begins The Civil [literary virtue] dance.

The seventh song, "*Tai He - Excellent Peace*", is played.

The prayer according to the Ming statutes was:

"All the numerous tribes of animated beings are indebted to thy favor for their beginning. Men and things are all imparadised in thy love, O Di. All living things are indebted to thy goodness, but who knows from whom his blessings come to him. It is thou alone, O Lord, who art the true parent of all things."

Stage six or sixth procedure: step 38

38. Last [third] offering of wine - The Sixth Procedure

The eighth song, "*Yong He - Everlasting Peace*", is played.

According to the Ming statutes the following prayer was offered:

"The precious feast is wide displayed; the gemmeous [gem filled] benches are arranged; the pearly wine is presented; with music and dances. The spirit of harmony is collected; men and creatures are happy. The breast of his servant is troubled, that he is unable to express his obligations."

Stage seven or seventh procedure: step 39

39. Removal of offering items and Cang-bi - The Seventh Procedure

The service personnel remove the offering items from the Altar and bring them to the oven.

The ninth song, "*Xian He - Splendid Peace*", is played.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was offered:

"The service of song is completed, but our poor sincerity cannot be expressed. Thy sovereign goodness is infinite. As a potter, hast thou made all living things. Great and small are sheltered (by thy love). As engraven on the heart of thy poor servant, is the sense of thy goodness, so that my feeling cannot be fully displayed. With great kindness thou doest bear with us, and, notwithstanding our demerits, dost grant us life and prosperity."

Stage eight or eighth procedure: step 40 thru 41

40. Sending off Di and gods (in ancient China shen = spirits) - The Eighth Procedure

The service personnel remove the silk and prayer writings from the Altar and bring them to the oven.

The tenth song, "*Qing He - Pure Peace*", is played.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was offered:

"With reverent ceremonies the record has been presented, and thou, O sovereign spirit, has deigned to accept our service. The dances have all been performed, and nine times the music has resounded. Grant, O Di, Thy great blessing to increase the happiness of my house. The instruments of metal and precious stones have given out their melody. The jeweled girdles of the officers have emitted their tinklings. Spirits and men rejoice together, praising Di, the Lord. While we celebrate his great name, what limit can there be, or what measure? For ever he setteth fast the high heavens, and establisheth the solid earth. His government is everlasting. His unworthy servant, I bow my head, I lay it in the dust, bathed in his grace and glory."

41. Burning of sacrificial items -

All the offerings to Shang-Di and ancestors are sent to the oven and burning pots to be burnt, thus showing sincerity and piety.

Stage nine or ninth procedure: step 42

42. Gazing Ceremony at the oven - The Ninth Procedure

The emperor stands at his gazing position by the burning oven to watch all the offering items, including the bull, to be burnt. The smoke and fragrance fill the air to show piety to Shang-Di and respect for the ancestors. The emperor stands facing east to watch the burnt offering as the sun rose in the background.

The eleventh song, "*Xi He - Glorious Peace*", is played.

According to the Ming Statutes the following prayer was offered.

"We have worshipped and written the great name on this gem-like sheet. Now we display it before Di, and place it in the fire. These valuable offerings of silks and fine meats we burn also, with these sincere prayers, that they may ascend in volumes of flames up to the distant azure. All the ends of the earth look up to Him. All human beings, all things on the earth, rejoice together in the great name."

The twelfth song, "*Ritual Completed*" was played

43. Changing robe at the canopy -

The emperor removes his sacrificial robe at the dressing canopy.

Conclusion and return to a prepared place: steps 44 thru 47

44. The emperor returns to the palace –

The emperor rides in ceremonial cart and exits from Zhao-Heng Gate, then he changes into the jade carriage to return to his palace.

The musicians lead the way playing the song “*Hu He - Protecting Peace.*”

45. Welcoming the emperor at Wu Gate -

The emperor, with his entourage, returns to the Forbidden City, government officials welcome him by kneeling outside of Wu Gate.

46. Winter Solstice celebration festival -

In celebration of the completion of the Great Sacrifice, the emperor entertains government officials and border tribe's ambassadors at the Forbidden City.

47. Proclamation to the nation -

Proclamation officer reads emperor's proclamation at Tian-An Gate (Gate of Heavenly Peace), giving amnesty to the entire nation.

SUMMARY

We could summarize the main purpose of the blood sacrifice from the names of the songs that were sung during the service under the Ming Dynasty. (Some of the Song names changed under the Qing Dynasty). The entire worship service at the Temple of Heaven was all about finding peace with God! Every Song was named for some kind of peace.

The entire ceremony was brought to a close when the emperor returned to the Forbidden City where they read the emperor's proclamation at Tian-An Gate, giving amnesty to the entire nation (step 47)! Tian-An means Heavenly Peace! This peace and forgiveness through offering the blood sacrifice is priceless and can't be purchased.

The only way this peace and forgiveness could be obtained was by faithfully observing the meticulous steps and painstaking preparations of ceremonial procedures. This attention to detail teaches us that God has a very definite and precise way for man to approach Him. The Scriptures verify this truth when they tell us Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him” (John 14:6).

Oh, the glorious peace that is available to us through the blood of our perfect sacrifice: the LORD Jesus Christ. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice

in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). That is why “there is no salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

This whole ceremonial procedure reveals the importance of the sacrificial ox, blood, wine, music, dance, prayer, and gifts to God. Through the Bible, we now understand how all of these special elements are fulfilled in the Christian salvation experience and worship today.

"The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen" (Ps. 98:2).

"They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after. . ."
(Ps. 68:24-25)

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" (Ps. 77:13)

CONCLUSION

Our study of China's blood covenant with Shang Di has taken us through four thousand years of history and around the world. We learned that even though China had faithfully preserved the ceremony of blood covenant at the Temple of Heaven, her own scholars admit they forgot the true spiritual meaning of the ceremony. This lack of understanding was already apparent by the time of Confucius around 500 B.C.

But we also learned that the one true supreme God who revealed Himself to China by the name of Shang Di also revealed himself to other nations around the world and throughout history. Because of that fact , anthropological and ethnological studies have been able to document the symbolic ceremonies and principles of blood covenant from practically all people groups around the world. Many of these peoples preserved the meaning of the ceremonies that had been handed down to them from the ancient past. Researching this information has allowed us to determine what the original spiritual meaning was in the blood covenant ceremonies in China and at the Temple of Heaven.

The ultimate meaning and eternal purpose for blood covenant was supernaturally hidden in the symbolism and procedures of blood sacrifice

in the Old Testament. We call these hidden truths “prophetic types.” All of the divinely inspired types of the Old Testament are ultimately fulfilled in the LORD Jesus Christ's death on the cross (Gal. 3:24-25). When Christ shed his blood on the cross, God instituted the very last blood covenant He will ever make with mankind. God intended all the old blood covenants to point people to the truth of salvation in Jesus Christ; not just in China, but all around the world. All these blood covenants that reveal scriptural truth are known as “redemptive analogies.” This ultimate truth of God’s last blood covenant with mankind is now being preached to the entire world through the Gospel as recorded in the Bible.

Anyone who will come on God’s terms can now enter into all the blessings of a blood covenant relationship with Shang Di through faith in Christ. Only then can we experience the peace and joy of knowing we are fulfilling our eternal destiny.

Our study of blood covenant as it was found in the ceremonies at the Temple of Heaven, around the world, and in God's Holy Scriptures; proves several important life changing truths:

1. They prove that the same one true eternal supreme God was teaching eternal truths in all of them. Amazingly, the symbolism that was accurately preserved in the ancient blood covenants all points to the truths of salvation in the LORD Jesus Christ! The Apostle Paul described the Old Testament times as “the times of ignorance [which] God winked at” (Acts 17:30). God forgives the Old Testament sinner based on their faith in the temporary animal sacrifice because they looked forward to the substitutionary death of the sinless Christ on the cross. God views everything from His timeless vantage point of eternity and sovereign control over His redemptive plan through the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

During Old Testament times, people had a limited understanding of salvation due to their spiritual ignorance and moral weakness. But their blood sacrifices offered to Shang Di was evidence of a faith that they could be made right with God through the blood of a perfect innocent sacrifice. Faith in God is required for salvation in any dispensation (Old or New Covenant). But the basis of salvation for any dispensation is the death of Christ. His death was proclaimed and prefigured in certain blood sacrifices before the Cross. His death is proclaimed through the preaching of the Gospel after the Cross. Thus the content and fullness of people’s faith varies under different dispensations because of the progressive

nature of God's redemptive revelation to the entire world. "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40).

2. Salvation is always through faith in the substitutionary death of a perfect sacrifice that takes the sinners' place in judgment. Blood covenant is a lesson in God's grace made available through the blood of the sinless Christ. Even though the revelation of blood covenant throughout history differed in degree of clarity, the message was always the same: the only way to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation is through the blood of an innocent spotless sacrifice. The only way to have an eternally secure relationship with our Creator and Redeemer is by entering into a blood covenant relationship with Him.

3. Throughout China's long history, Shang Di has continually revealed Himself and His truth. The Temple of Heaven has been declared a world treasure by the UN. It is proof to the entire world that God has never left Himself without a witness of His Godhead, goodness, power, glory, and salvation (Acts 14:17).

4. Shang Di loves the Chinese very much! So He preserved this incredible worship ceremony in China while preserving its eternal significance and purpose in the Bible. Shang Di has some incredible purpose and plan for all Chinese. The fulfillment of that glorious plan will involve faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to God's inspired Word as it is found in the Holy Bible.

5. Christianity is not a foreign western religion to China. Shang Di is China's God. He has clearly revealed Himself throughout China's 4500 years of recorded history in many different ways. But Shang Di is also the same God revealed in the Bible of Judaism and Christianity. He is the one true God of both East and West, the supreme God of all creation. Originally, Christianity was not a western religion: it began in the East. But it became the religion of the west because they realized it was true, right, and good. It is important for China to put her faith in Christ now. Why? "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Ps. 33:12).

6. Buddhism is not China's true spiritual roots. Historically, the pattern for the worship of Shang Di at the Temple of Heaven goes back to at least 2200 B.C. This is over 1500 years before there was any Buddhist or Taoist idols or gods invented by men. Shang Di is the only God in China that goes back to the very beginning because he is the one true

eternal God. God tells us the "former things" by revealing to us the meaning of the blood covenant ceremonies in ancient times in his Bible. And then God declares to us the "things that are to come hereafter" by revealing the ultimate spiritual fulfillment of blood covenant in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. This ability to reveal the past and the future is a concrete proof the Bible is the Word of God. Shang Di himself challenges all other false gods and false religions when he says,

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee: lest thou should say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. . . I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now. . .lest thou should say, Behold, I knew them" (Isaiah 46:9-10; 48:5-7).

IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE A DECISION NOW

A Chinese proverb says, "Everything is settled by Heaven." God's Word (The Bible) tells us "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Would you like to follow in the footsteps of your forefathers by humbling yourself before Almighty God now by repenting of your sins? Then you can enter into an eternal blood covenant relationship with Shang Di by asking Jesus Christ to save you from all your transgressions against His holy law. Shang Di knows your heart. He knows if you are truly sorry and repentant for the transgressions you committed against him. If you are ready to forsake all idols and false gods and worship and serve the one true God alone, then you can pray and ask Jesus Christ to save you from your sins, and restore your broken relationship with Shang Di. The following is a suggested prayer.

Dear LORD God, thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for ALL my sins. I believe Jesus died in my place as Your perfect substitutionary sacrifice to restore my broken relationship with You. I believe Jesus rose from the dead never to die again, and ascended into heaven. I believe that some day Jesus will return to this earth to judge it and set up His eternal righteous kingdom. I want to be a part of that glorious kingdom. Lord Jesus, please come into my heart and cleanse me of all my sins. Forgive me of all my transgressions against Your holy law.

Fill me with Your Holy Spirit so I can understand Your Holy Word. Thank You for saving me. Empower me to live worthy of our blood covenant relationship. Dear LORD, I pray these things in the Name your only begotten Son and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen."

If you have prayed this prayer or would like to learn more about a life transforming blood covenant relationship with Shang Di and Jesus Christ, you need to find a good Christian church that teaches the Word of God in the Bible to help you grow in your relationship with the one true eternal God. You can obtain more materials by contacting us through the website or by sending a letter to the website mailing address below:

www.shangti-research.org
501 N. Santa Anita Ave.
Arcadia, CA 91006 USA

Or email to: mail@mbcop.org
Phone: (626)446-2976

I am sure you have many questions after studying these exciting truths. If you haven't read the first two booklets in this series: "The True Spiritual Roots for All Chinese," and "Who is Shang Di?" we encourage you to read copies in either Chinese or English versions. You can find them online at:

www.shangti-research.org

They will help everyone better understand their true spiritual roots as a Chinese and lay a solid foundation for building a new life in blood covenant relationship with Shang Di through Jesus Christ.

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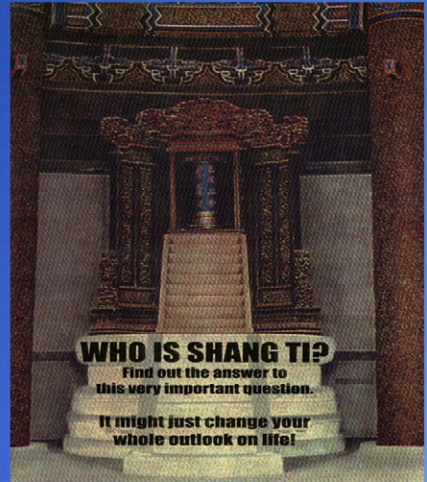
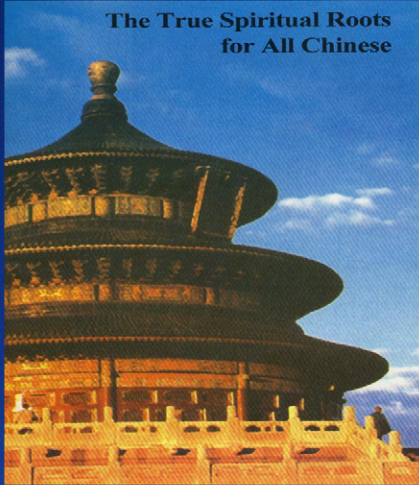
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Book II
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