

Bible Study on Genesis 22

Three Views on Child Sacrifice IN the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. Although we might owe our child (or firstborn) to God, God DOES NOT want us to actually sacrifice a human.
2. Whoever thinks that God wants child (or firstborn) sacrifice has the WRONG theology.
3. God might legitimately expect sacrifice of a child (or firstborn) and this is an extreme—but acceptable—act of devotion

1. Although we might owe our child (or firstborn) to God, God DOES NOT want us to actually sacrifice a human.

- Exod 13:2, 11-16
- Exod 11 - 12
- Exod 4:24-26
- Lev 27:1-8
- Num 3:39-48
- Num 6:1-21

Exodus 13:2, 11-16

² Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.

¹¹ “When the LORD has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your ancestors, and has given it to you, ¹² you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your livestock that are males shall be the LORD’s. ¹³ But every firstborn donkey you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. Every firstborn male among your children you shall redeem. ¹⁴ When in the future your child asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall answer, ‘By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

Exodus 11 – 12

- In summary: In these chapters we see God implement the death of the firstborn across all people in Egypt from Pharaoh's child to that of the female slave in the dungeon. But, the Passover is implemented as a way of saying that this (1) is a one time event and (2) though God could take away life like this at any point in the future, we do this ritual meal of Passover to remember God's mercy in sparing us.

Exodus 4:24-26


²⁴ On the way, at a place where they spent the night, the LORD met him and tried to kill him. ²⁵ But Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched his feet with it, and said, "Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" ²⁶ So he let him alone. It was then she said, "A bridegroom of blood by circumcision."

Leviticus 27:1-8

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When a person makes an explicit vow to the LORD concerning the equivalent for a human being, ³ the equivalent for a male shall be: from twenty to sixty years of age the equivalent shall be fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary shekel. ⁴ If the person is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels. ⁵ If the age is from five to twenty years of age, the equivalent is twenty shekels for a male and ten shekels for a female. ⁶ If the age is from one month to five years, the equivalent for a male is five shekels of silver, and for a female the equivalent is three shekels of silver. ⁷ And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the equivalent for a male is fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁸ If any cannot afford the equivalent, they shall be brought before the priest and the priest shall assess them; the priest shall assess them according to what each one making a vow can afford.

Numbers 3:39-48

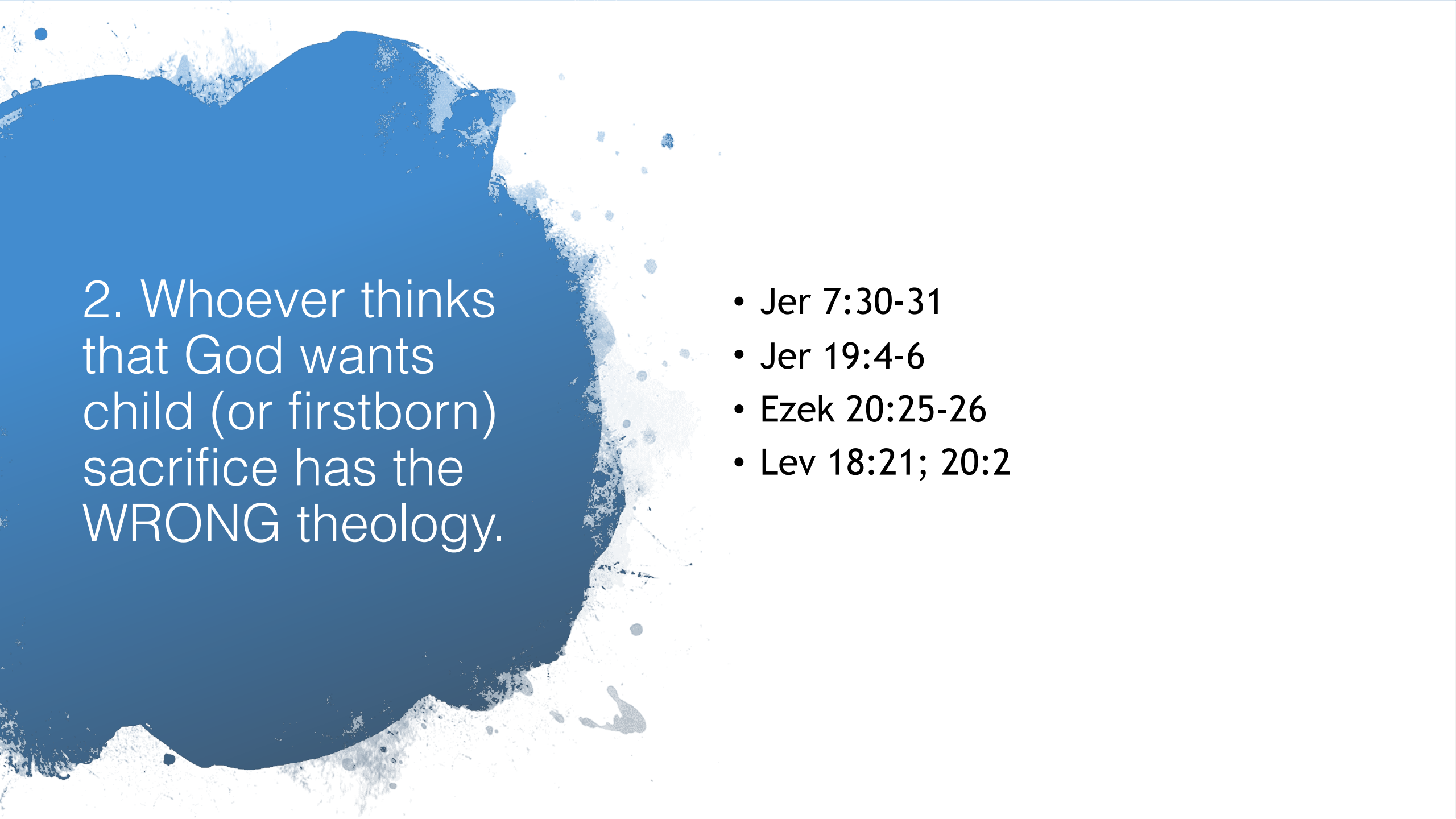
³⁹ The total enrollment of the Levites whom Moses and Aaron enrolled at the commandment of the LORD, by their clans, all the males from a month old and upward, was twenty-two thousand. ⁴⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses: Enroll all the firstborn males of the Israelites, from a month old and upward, and count their names. ⁴¹ But you shall accept the Levites for me—I am the LORD—as substitutes for all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn among the livestock of the Israelites. ⁴² So Moses enrolled all the firstborn among the Israelites, as the LORD commanded him. ⁴³ The total enrollment, all the firstborn males from a month old and upward, counting the number of names, was twenty-two thousand two hundred seventy-three. ⁴⁴ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁴⁵ Accept the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for their livestock; and the Levites shall be mine. I am the LORD. ⁴⁶ As the price of redemption of the two hundred seventy-three of the firstborn of the Israelites, over and above the number of the Levites, ⁴⁷ you shall accept five shekels apiece, reckoning by the shekel of the sanctuary, a shekel of twenty gerahs. ⁴⁸ Give to Aaron and his sons the money by which the excess number of them is redeemed.



Numbers

6:1-21

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When either men or women make a special vow, the vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves to the LORD, [...]



2. Whoever thinks that God wants child (or firstborn) sacrifice has the **WRONG** theology.

- Jer 7:30-31
- Jer 19:4-6
- Ezek 20:25-26
- Lev 18:21; 20:2

Jeremiah 7:30-31

³⁰ For the people of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the LORD; they have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name, defiling it. ³¹ And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.

Jeremiah 19:4-6

⁴ Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent, ⁵ and gone on building the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it enter my mind; ⁶ therefore the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter.

Ezekiel 20:25-26

²⁵ Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. ²⁶ I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their firstborn, in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the LORD.

Leviticus 18:21; 20:2

²¹ You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

² Say further to the people of Israel:

Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death.

3. God might legitimately expect sacrifice of a child (or firstborn), and this is an extreme—but acceptable—act of devotion

- Exod 22:28-29 [vv. 29-30 in English]
- Judg 11:30-31, 34-35
- Micah 6:6-8

Exodus 22:28-29 [29-30 in English]

²⁹ You shall not delay to make offerings from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses.

The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. ³⁰ You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

Judges 11:30-31, 34-35

³⁰ And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, “If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, ³¹ then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the LORD’s, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering.”

³⁴ Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and there was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and with dancing. She was his only child; he had no son or daughter except her. ³⁵ When he saw her, he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low; you have become the cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow.”

Micah 6:6-8

⁶ “With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of
rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my
transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my
soul?”

⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?