

## 372 I'm going round in circles!

Going on journeys can really provide good learning experiences, as long as you have an open mind: Abraham leaving Ur for the promised land, or God's people escaping Egypt.

I've been on a journey for seven years and, just like God's people in the wilderness, I've been going round in circles: in two recent articles,<sup>[369,370]</sup> I got all excited, and then realised it was the exact same thing God had showed me six year ago – but maybe revision is good.

An exciting new thought occurred to me this week, but I now realise it's an aspect of what I wrote in 2022,<sup>[226]</sup> which itself was a reprise of what God showed me in 2020.<sup>[135,136]</sup> Anyway, if the message below strikes you, maybe look back at <sup>[226]</sup>? But none of what I write is 'right', of course, although hopefully I'm heading in vaguely the right direction.

We know that God wants to live in relationship with people – all people, if possible, if we are willing. My articles have traced this through, inspired by the likes of Walton and Boyd, from Genesis 1–3 to Revelation 21,22. All the while, God is trying to draw us away from living our lives focused around ourselves (sIn – which leads to sins) to living 'in ChrIst'.

So <sup>[226]</sup> traces how, over the millennia, God led us from the idea of capricious deities who zap you, soon as look at you, to a Jesus-like God. Remember, the OT writers, though inspired, didn't (couldn't) realise what God was *really* like (like Jesus the self-sacrificing Messiah-King).

Part of this change of understanding is about sacrifice(s). To placate the gods, humans used to sacrifice other humans, but then it became 'only' sacrificing babies. Even Abraham – the first trust-in-God advocate – thought God wanted him to sacrifice his own son, so God moved him over to 'only' sacrificing animals. (Yes, God used it as a 'type', but it was still a wrong understanding of God!)

OK, sacrifice is (was?) important: it says, 'sIn is a very serious matter', and God pointed to blood as a way of cleansing us. When we're cleansed, our relationship is restored.

Jesus brought the next step in reducing our obsession with sacrifice by *being* a sacrifice, a once-for-all sacrifice. But this is all to move us *away* from blood-sacrifice as a way of cleansing, to knowing that when God says, 'I forgive you', and we trust God (have faith in God) then that's it – we ARE forgiven.

Sadly, over the centuries (esp. 2nd millennium) humans have added their own 'how to be forgiven' ideas. The Reformation pulled back from the idea of being saved by 'doing' something (or paying monks to do things on our behalf), but we added the we-know-how-God-works mechanism: God's anger has to be appeased by a sacrificial death. Sorry, no!

No, when God says we are cleansed, we are cleansed, by faith, by simply trusting God, and not by trying to understand, explain, justify God's actions.