

Atonement and the Cross of Christ ***The Fall into Sin***

Lesson #3 for October 18, 2008

Scriptures: Genesis 1-3; Romans 3:9-18; 5:10-21; 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19.

1. This series of lessons is designed to create a framework of ideas from which to understand the purpose of the life, death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus Christ.
2. An introduction to the whole concept is given in the Preface to the series in the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*:

What is atonement? In general, it could be said that the word *atonement* refers to the removal of any hindrance to fellowship with God. In a sense, atonement is the equivalent of reconciliation, but it also includes the idea of *expiation*, a fancy word that portrays the idea of removing any barrier that exists between God and us. The doctrine of atonement emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ as the exclusive expiatory means by which the barrier between us and God—which is sin—is removed, leaving us reconciled to Him.

What is that barrier? Could we be reconciled to God and still have sin as a barrier? What is the difference between reconciliation and expiation? Is there some kind of barrier outside of us that must be dealt with? Do we need to be “washed in the blood”? If a reconciliation requires a better understanding between the two parties, then God must reveal Himself to us, and only Christ can do that.

3. The Preface continues by saying:

We should never give the impression that the death of Christ was needed in order to persuade God to love us. God sent Christ to die for us because He already loved us... [John 3:16]

Thus it's our sincere hope that this quarter, as you study the meaning of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, you will be moved toward a greater commitment to the One who suffered so much for us,... *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*

What is a substitutionary sacrifice? Can our sins be removed from us and “placed” on a lamb or on Christ? Is sin a substance that can be moved around?

4. Love is the very essence of God's nature and character. It is that love which is the basis for the atonement. God and His love have existed forever and will continue to exist forever. (Genesis 21:33; Psalms 90:2; 102:25-27; Hebrews 1:10-12) God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. God's omniscience is made apparent by Psalms 139; Isaiah 46:10; Daniel 2; 12; Matthew 10:30; Romans 16:25; Hebrews 4:13; and 1 Peter 1:19,20. This implies that God knows everything from beginning to end.
5. **If God knew all about us and all about Lucifer/Satan before our rebellion, why did He create Lucifer? And why did He create us?** Because God is by nature love, He longs to interact with creatures who can and do love Him back. But love requires freedom. Freedom

requires orderliness or “law.” Freedom necessitates the option of rebelling against God. The Scriptures tell us that God knew in advance what was coming, but He made provision for the terrible emergency. Did Lucifer/Satan produce some kind of “stain” or “mess” in heaven that had to be cleaned up?

6. We must recognize that God is our Creator and that He wishes to make us new—into His own image. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
7. While God makes it abundantly clear that He is unique in the universe, (Isaiah 40:25) He also makes it clear that He wishes to dwell among us. (Isaiah 57:15)
8. **God knew about our rebellion before this world was created. How do we reconcile our freedom with God’s foreknowledge? Is it possible for God to know about our choices before we make them and still allow us full freedom? Or are our choices predetermined? In the days of the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin decided that God has already “predestined” every one of us to either be saved or lost. The biblical word for predestined means that “horizons” or “borders” have been set in advance. Men can never be women. Caucasians can never be African-Americans, etc. There are some limits to what we can be even from our birth. Are we so arrogant that we believe that God cannot know anything that we do not know?**
9. As we know, sin entered our universe when Lucifer began to entertain thoughts of jealousy and self-exultation as he stood next to the throne of God in heaven. Remember that the great controversy began in the sanctuary in heaven! No created being could have been more honored than Lucifer was. He was even given one of the names of God: Lucifer or Light-bearer. But he cherished thoughts of jealousy concerning Christ. He wanted to be equal to or even superior to the Son of God Himself. His thinking is characterized by the following passages: Isaiah 14:13,14; Ezekiel 28:14-17; *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 35; *Desire of Ages* p. 21. How could Lucifer possibly have convinced one-third of the angels that God was selfish and unfair while they were living in God’s very presence?
10. Read Ezekiel 28:16. The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* points out that the words translated “trade” or “buying and selling” could also mean “slander.” Certainly, Satan did everything possible to slander the character and government of God. We know that Satan has been identified as the “accuser of the brethren.” (Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10) That slander led to irreconcilable differences. (Ezekiel 28:16) “War in heaven” was the result. (Revelation 12:7) Was it a war of violence in which the more powerful would win? Or was it a war of thoughts and ideas over the character and government of God?
11. God knew very well what would be the consequences of sin and rebellion. God actually called all the angels together and warned them of the deceptions of Satan. (*PP* 36,37; *1SP* 17-22) He and the angels very clearly warned Adam, and Adam in turn warned Eve that sin leads to death. (Genesis 2:17) Satan claimed that this statement by God was a lie. (Genesis 3:4,5)
12. Since his rebellion, Satan has always claimed that creatures do not need the laws and guidance of God. He claimed that angels were smart enough to make their own choices without God’s guidance. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 37)
13. One of the reasons why Satan was apparently jealous of Christ was that Christ was Creator of everything. (Colossians 1:16,17) Satan himself did not have power to create anything. We have

more “creative powers” than Satan has! On many occasions Satan also accused God of selfish motives and selfish behaviors. (Job 1:8-11; 2:1-6)

14. When Satan rebelled in heaven, what options did God have for dealing with him? If God had allowed Satan to die immediately—thus reaping the natural consequences of his self-imposed separation from God—what would have been the result? (*Desire of Ages* p. 759) The heavenly creatures may have thought that God had destroyed Satan. God does not use force or compelling power. God wanted to answer the question of sin once and for all eternity.
15. If God had simply forgiven Satan—after giving him a severe warning not to do it again—what would have been the result? What would have happened if God had simply ignored Satan’s rebellion? What options does God have in the history of our universe for dealing with rebellion?
16. Was there anything God could have done to reconcile Satan and his rebellious friends?

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God’s glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God’s love. [762] Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan’s sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God’s love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. {*Desire of Ages* 761.5}

17. It was not long until Satan spread his rebellion to this earth. What evidence can you find in the first three chapters of Genesis that hints at that rebellion? (Genesis 2:16,17; 3:2,3,6) Satan deceived and tempted our first parents by lying to them about God’s nature. He actually accused God of being motivated by the same motives that Satan himself had. He accused God of lying and of withholding from His creatures something that was very beneficial. (Genesis 3:1-5)
18. What was Eve’s first sin? Was it wandering away from Adam? It was not in believing the “snake.” Her first sin was not trusting God! What was Adam’s sin? Choosing to go with Eve instead of God. Think of all the trouble that could have been avoided if Eve had just said to the snake, “You may be right. But the tree will be here tomorrow. Let me discuss it with my husband and with God; and if it is a good idea to eat of this tree, I will be back then!” Remember that temptation is not a sin. Jesus was tempted. As a result of their sin, human beings felt shame, fear, and separation from God. Their interpersonal relationship also deteriorated. (Genesis 3:12) What was needed was reconciliation. How could God bring that about? When did Lucifer first sin? When he decided that he no longer needed to do things God’s way. “I can make my own decisions. I don’t need You, God, to tell me what to do!”
19. The Bible speaks of sin as a slave master. (Romans 5:12,21; 6:12,20; 7:11,13,17; 2 Peter 2:19) As a result of our giving loyalty to Satan and sin, we have become totally sinful. (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:9-18,23) In what way is sin a slave master? How would you describe that slavery? Intimacy, harmony, happiness, and an abundant, joyful life have been exchanged for separation, dissension, shame, fear, misery, and death. What has been the ultimate result of that first sin? What has happened to our human nature? (Jeremiah 17:9) The results are spread out on the pages of Scripture. (Galatians 5:17; Romans 1:18-31; Matthew

15:19)

20. The first glimmer of hope given by God to Adam and Eve is found in Genesis 3:15. He said to the serpent, “I will make you and the woman hate each other;...” What does that imply? How does God do that?
21. God promises to take away our rebellion described as our “stony hearts” and to give us “new hearts.” (Ezekiel 11:19,20; Romans 8:31-39) If a “new heart” is all that is required for salvation, why isn’t it possible for everyone to be saved? Why can’t God give everyone a new heart?
22. **God said from the beginning that sin would lead to death. (Genesis 2:17) Is that a result of God’s command or simply a description of what happens when we rebel against God? What does it imply when we say that Christ conquered death? (1 Corinthians 15:20-27; 54-56)**
23. In light of all these clear warnings, why do we sin—and even enjoy sinning? Is it possible to separate sin and its results, death? (Romans 6:23) Since the days of Adam, human beings have been trying to figure out how to sin without suffering the consequences! It is impossible!
24. **If someone dies “in our place,” is that enough? Could an angel have died in our place? Why? Or, why not?** The questions that Satan had raised were about God’s character and how He runs His universe. God Himself must demonstrate the answers.
25. **The New Testament suggests in several places that we need to be “redeemed.” Does that imply that a ransom must be paid to someone? To whom would a ransom be paid? Is someone demanding a ransom? Who would pay the ransom? What would the ransom price be?**
26. How would you describe God’s reaction to sin? In the garden? On the cross? In our lives? (Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10)
27. How do you describe God’s “wrath”? Is it anything like human anger?

God’s wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway—thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choice. (Romans 1:18,24,26,28; Hosea 4:17; Judges 2,3)

© 2008 Kenneth Hart, MD. ***Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials and we might even want to share good ideas with others, so let us know.*** Info@theox.org

Last modified: September 12, 2008

C:\My Documents\WP\SSSTG-Hart\Atonement\SS-3-Atonement-2008_10_18-2008_08_29.wpd