

The Sanctuary

Christ, Our Sacrifice

Lesson #7 for November 16, 2013

Scriptures: Isaiah 53:2-12; Hebrews 2:9; 4:15; 9:12,26-28; Exodus 12:5.

1. The book of Hebrews describes Christ as both our Sacrifice (Hebrews 9,10) and our High Priest. (Hebrews 5-10) In this lesson we will discuss what it means to suggest that Christ is our Sacrifice.
2. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. What do these verses say to you? The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday states that:

Jesus' death is atonement in the form of penal substitution, which means that He took the penalty that others deserved and, in fact, died as a Substitute for them. Here are some of the implications of this passage for Jesus' ministry for us:

1. Jesus suffered *for* others. He took their grief and sorrows (*vs. 4*), transgressions, iniquities (*vss. 5, 6, 8, 11*), and sin (*vs. 12*).
2. He brings great benefits to those for whom He suffers: peace and healing (*vs. 5*) and justification (*vs. 11*).
3. It was God's will for Jesus to suffer and be crushed (*vs. 10*). God put our iniquity on Him (*vs. 6*) because it was God's plan that He died in our stead.
4. Jesus is righteous (*vs. 11*), without violence or deceit (*vs. 9*).
5. He was a guilt offering, an atoning sacrifice for sin (*vs. 10*).

Do you agree with these statements, assertions, and interpretations and their implications?

3. There are several important points to consider when reading Isaiah 53.
 - 1) It should be clear in every Christian's mind that if Jesus had not come and lived and died, we would have no hope of salvation. In that very broad sense, Jesus was definitely a Substitute for us.
 - 2) Many of our Christian friends believe that the sufferings and death of Jesus were necessary because they were required by God. In their thinking, God was upset because man had sinned; and therefore, He demanded a death to pay for that sin. Jesus offered to come and live the perfect life without sin and die as a sacrificial death to meet the requirements of God; and thus, we can be saved. In that context, it is very interesting to read the last part of Isaiah 53:4, "All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God." Of course, the implication being that it was not punishment sent by God. However, all the rest of Isaiah 53 seems to suggest that it was punishment sent by God.
 - 3) The way most people read Isaiah 53 is very self-centered. It is all about how God saves you and me—especially me. But, what do their views say about God? Is God a harsh, demanding Tyrant?
4. Read Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32-35; and 1 Peter 2:21-25. It is very clear that these New Testament authors believed that the words of Isaiah 53 applied to Jesus Christ. Read 1 Peter 2:24-25. Just as we have read that the priest in the Old Testament carried the sins of the sinner into the sanctuary, we are told that Christ Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross. This is supposed to result in our dying to sin and living for righteousness. "It is by

His wounds that you have been healed.” If we are like sheep that have lost their way, what is required to bring us back?

5. As asked by the literary character Bozo/Boso in Anselm’s (ca. 1033-1109) *Cur Deus Homo*: **If God could only save sinners by condemning the Innocent, is He truly omnipotent? If, on the other hand, He could, but is not willing to do so, how are we to think of Him as wise and just? What justice could there possibly be in accepting the death of the most innocent Man who ever lived in place of the guilty? No human legal system would accept that. So, how can God do such a thing?** And if this “legal” transaction makes it possible for God to save sinners because they are “covered with the righteousness of Christ,” would that suggest that we are taken into heaven without God the Father realizing that we are still sinners? Is that legal fiction? (See John 10:18)
6. So, what is your understanding of what Christ has done for you personally? In what sense did He carry your sins to the cross? Is it possible that Jesus actually died for your sins 2000 years before they were committed? How are we supposed to understand such passages?
7. Read Hebrews 2:9,17; 9:26-28; and 10:12. In the *NKJV*, Hebrews 2:17 suggests that Jesus died to make “propitiation for the sins of the people.” What is your understanding of that expression? *Propitiation* means to try to appease someone’s anger. Is God angry?
8. Could you explain clearly to someone who asked you why Jesus had to die? Do you understand why His death was necessary for you to be saved? Or, do you believe that God could save us without Jesus having to die? What are the issues in the great controversy? How do those issues impact you on a day-by-day basis?
9. Why do you think God chose that method to deal with sin? (Romans 8:3)

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.1.

Did Jesus feel the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane?

10. Why was it necessary for Christ Himself to come to live as the human Jesus and die? Could an angel have done the same for us? If not, why not? In last week’s lesson, we suggested—based on *That I May Know Him*, p. 338—that if the Father had come instead of the Son, things would not have been one bit different. Does this help us in our understanding of Isaiah 53:4b? This is completely contrary to many people’s idea of what happened.
11. In the Old Testament, there is a great deal of emphasis on the blood sacrifices. There is a great deal of talk about it in the book of Hebrews. (Hebrews 9:12,14,18,22; 10:19; 12:24; 13:12,20) Is there some special significance to blood in this context? Hebrews suggests that His own blood leads to our salvation. It purifies our consciences from useless rituals and makes the covenant effective. Blood was to purify and, thus, lead to the possibility of forgiveness. Jesus’ death leads to complete freedom for us to enter the most holy place. Blood purifies people from sin and seals the eternal covenant. How does it do that?

12. Read the following two paragraphs from our *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Tuesday, November 12.

Christ's blood does not refer to His life, but instead it is a symbol of His substitutionary death. As such, it describes the functional aspect of that death. Christ's shed blood is amazingly multifunctional. Christ's blood obtains eternal redemption for us, provides us with cleansing from sin, provides us with forgiveness and sanctification, and is the reason for the resurrection.

In Hebrews, there is a powerful contrast: Christ's blood is better than any other blood. **In fact, no other blood can really provide forgiveness; Christ's death is the only reason why sins are forgiven, before and after the Cross (Heb. 9:15).** The shedding of Christ's blood, and its effects, are clear evidence that Christ's death was substitutionary, which means that He took the penalty that we deserve.

13. How do you understand these words?
14. In almost every place where *blood* is mentioned specifically, the *Good News Bible* from the American Bible Society says, "or sacrificial death." Then, is *blood* just a code word for the sacrificial death of Jesus? What does it mean to say, "Christ's death is the only reason sins are forgiven before and after the cross." (Hebrews 9:15) We have sometimes suggested that God is forgiveness Personified. Before He died, Jesus forgave the people who were nailing Him to the cross. (Luke 23:34) So, what is your understanding of what the blood of Christ has done for you?
15. Read Exodus 12:5 and Leviticus 3:1; 4:3. Of course, we know that Jesus lived a sinless life. Do these Old Testament passages mean that He could not have died for us if He had sinned? Why was it necessary for the life of Jesus to be completely sinless? (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 9:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19) The sacrifices offered at the temple were supposed to be unblemished—without fault. Was the perfect life that Jesus lived the guarantee of our salvation? Are we saved because His perfect righteousness covers us? Is that our only hope of salvation?

By comparing their lives with Christ's character, they will be able to discern where they have failed to meet the requirements of God's holy law; and will seek to make themselves perfect in their sphere even as God is perfect in his sphere. [Matthew 5:48]—Ellen G. White, *The Paulson Letters*, p. 374.

16. Read Jude 24. Is it only possible for Christ's blameless life to make us perfect because He stands in our place? Does this suggest that, sooner or later, we are to become perfect?
17. Read Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31. A misreading of these two passages led Martin Luther to basically reject the book of Hebrews. He placed Hebrews at the end of the New Testament along with James, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation because he was not sure what to do with them! How do you understand these two passages? How do you think God should relate to people who claim to be Christians and yet go on sinning? Or, as Hebrews says, "They are again crucifying the Son of God"? Is it possible that some of us have rejected God's salvation not just because we have consciously and openly chosen to do so but because we have tended to take God's offer casually and are gradually slipping further and further back into the habits and customs of this world?
18. If we truly fixed our eyes upon Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and really sought to become more and more like Him giving the Holy Spirit access to our minds so we could be changed, what would happen? We would be changed!
19. In the following words, Ellen White also spoke of Christ's substitution on our behalf:

Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed." [Isaiah 53:5]—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

Nothing less than the death of Christ could make His love efficacious for us. It is only because of His death that we can look with joy to His second coming. His sacrifice is the center of our hope. Upon this we must fix our faith.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

20. Self-centered sinners can look at the passages we have been given to read in this lesson and thank God that all this has been done to save us—especially me. Does that sound at least a little bit selfish?
21. How often do we think about what our lives and our beliefs say about God? The great controversy is not about us. Everyone knows that we are sinners! (Romans 3:23) The great controversy is about how God answers the misrepresentations, accusations, and questions that Satan has raised about God's character and government. Are we living lives that correctly represent God in the great controversy? Aren't God's children supposed to act like Him?
22. Read Zechariah 3:1-5. Why is it that in this passage no sacrifice was made on Joshua's behalf? His filthy clothes—representing the sins of the people—were simply removed and replaced with pure white garments. Does that mean that this passage is not a clear representation of the truth? Or, even a correct representation?
23. Many people regard Isaiah 53 as one of the most precious passages in the whole Bible. Is Isaiah 53:4-6 the best possible description of the role of our Savior in this world?
24. What does this lesson say to us about the involvement of the entire universe in the plan of salvation?
25. In the latter part of the book of Isaiah, there are five songs talking about a Servant of the Lord. These are sometimes called "the songs of the suffering servant." (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3) Why do you suppose Isaiah was given these messages? Are they clearly describing a substitutionary sacrifice?
26. Read Isaiah 53:6, 11-12. Why does Isaiah 53:6 suggest that "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" while Isaiah 53:11-12 say, "He bore the sin of many" or "to justify many"? Who were the "all" in Isaiah 53:6 and the "many" in 53:11-12? (Compare Acts 13:47)
27. In this lesson we have compared a number of different passages in Hebrews with these very significant passages in Isaiah 42-61, especially Isaiah 53. Is it more important to you that Jesus died on this earth as a substitutionary Sacrifice for you and for me? Or, that God has answered all the questions in the great controversy that have been raised by Satan, thus defeating him completely? Isn't the whole universe involved in this great controversy?

© 2013, Kenneth Hart MD, MA, MPH. 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 how you are using them. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: October 27, 2013

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\SSTG-Hart\Sanctuary\SS-7-Sanctuary-2012_11_16-Fin+.wpd