

Christ, Our Sacrifice



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Isaiah 53:2–12; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 9:26–28; Hebrews 9:12; Exodus 12:5; Hebrews 4:15.

MEMORY VERSE: “He [Jesus] himself carried our sins in his body on the cross. He did it so that we would die as far as sins are concerned. Then we would lead godly lives. His wounds have made you whole” (1 Peter 2:24, NIV).

CATHOLIC PRIEST MAXIMILLIAN KOLBE WAS IMPRISONED IN AUSCHWITZ (A FAMOUS GERMAN “WORK” CAMP IN WORLD WAR II) FOR GIVING SHELTER TO ESCAPEES FROM GREATER POLAND, INCLUDING 2,000 JEWS. A prisoner in Kolbe’s barracks vanished (perhaps he escaped). The SS¹ picked ten prisoners to be starved to death as punishment. One of the chosen men cried out, “Oh, my poor wife, my poor children. I shall never see them again.” At that point Kolbe offered himself to take the man’s place. Kolbe asked that he be the one to starve, not the family man. The surprised SS officer agreed. So, Kolbe joined the doomed ten men while the family man survived.

Kolbe’s story is heart touching. But his sacrifice is only a shadow (small example) of the one that Jesus made when He willingly took our place. Jesus’ act was symbolized (shown) in the earthly sanctuary² service. The New Testament connects Jesus to the two most important parts of the Old Testament sacrificial system.³ He is our Sacrifice (Hebrews 9; Hebrews 10), and He is our High Priest (Hebrews 5–10).

This week we will study different parts of Christ’s full sacrifice and see what His once-and-for-all death has given to us.

1. SS—defense group in the German Nazi Party.

2. earthly sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here, the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

3. sacrificial system—in the Jewish sanctuary (home of God) service animals were sacrificed (put to death) as a symbol to show that the people of Israel received forgiveness of sins. This service helped to point people to the future sacrifice (death) of Jesus Christ on the cross for their sins.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 10**JESUS IN ISAIAH 53**
(Isaiah 53:2–12)

Read Isaiah 53:2–12. What do these verses teach about what Christ did for us?

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is a powerful description of Christ's death for the sins of the world. These verses give clear proof that Jesus' death is our atonement (cleansing). He took the penalty for sin that others deserved. And He also died as a Substitute for them. Here are several lessons from these verses showing Jesus' ministry (work) for us:

1. Jesus suffered for others. He took their grief and sorrows (Isaiah 53:4) and sins (verses 5, 6, 8, 11, 12).

2. He brings great blessings to those for whom He suffers: peace and healing (verse 5) and justification (the act of being made right with God) (verse 11).

3. It was God's will for Jesus to suffer and be crushed (verse 10). God put our sins on Him (verse 6) because it was God's plan that He died in our place.

4. Jesus is righteous (holy) (verse 11) without hurting or tricking people (verse 9).

5. He was a guilt offering, an atoning⁴ sacrifice for sin (verse 10).

Read Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32–35; and 1 Peter 2:21–25. How did Luke and Peter interpret Isaiah 53?

The New Testament references to (mentions of) Isaiah 53 prove beyond doubt that Jesus Christ fulfills (completes) this prophecy (special message from God). Even He counted Himself among criminals (Luke 22:37). Christ took our sins upon Himself so that we could be forgiven and changed.

Think about all that Isaiah 53 says that Christ did for us. How can you make this personal for yourself, knowing you have the Lord's promise of salvation if you give yourself to Him in faith?



Jesus took the grief, sorrows, and sins of others into His heart.

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 11

WAS CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS AS OUR SUBSTITUTE GOOD ENOUGH? (Hebrews 2:17)

Read Hebrews 2:9. What does it mean that Jesus "taste[d] death for everyone" (NIV)? See also Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 9:26–28; and Hebrews 10:12.

4. atoning—having the power to cleanse from sin and clear from guilt.

Jesus died for sinners. He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). So when He gave His life as a sacrifice, He was not dying for His own sin. Instead, He was bearing (carrying) “the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28, NKJV), paying “for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17, NIV), and putting away sin forever (Hebrews 9:26).

According to Hebrews 2:9, the purpose of making Jesus “lower than the angels” was so that He could suffer death. The point is that Jesus’ death was necessary for His honor and glory. In simple words, Jesus had to die for humans to be saved. There was no other way.

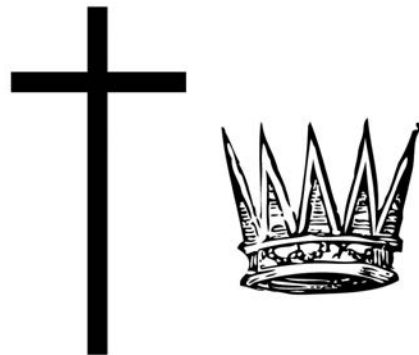
In these verses, the goal of Jesus’ becoming human was the death of the Son. It was only through the suffering of death that Jesus could become the Author of salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

Why was it fitting (proper) for God to let Jesus suffer? Hebrews 2:14–18 suggests that Jesus’ death was necessary so that He could rescue God’s children from the slavery of death, from the devil, and from the fear of death as well as become a “merciful and faithful High Priest” (verse 17, NKJV). In short, the Cross had to come before the crown.

“All our sins were put on Christ as our Substitute and ransom [payment for sin]. He was thought of as a law-breaker so that He might save us from the curse of the law. The guilt of every future child of Adam was pressing upon Jesus’ heart. The anger of God against sin filled the soul of His Son with deep sorrow.”

—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 753.

Christ, the Creator of the universe, died as a human being for your sins. Think about what this means. Think of the wonderfully good news that it is. Think of the hope it offers to you as a person. How can you make this wonderful truth the chief (most important) reason for doing God’s work?



The Cross had to come before the crown.

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 12

CHRIST’S BLOOD (Hebrews 9:12)

The idea of blood as the necessary agent for salvation is everywhere in the Bible. Starting from the earliest sacrifices after Adam and Eve sinned, blood was always present when animal sacrifices took place. Blood services also were an important part of the Israelite sacrificial system. This is to show the important truth that, without blood, our sins could not be forgiven. Neither would we be able to enter into the presence of God. Blood was

the only way to receive God's mercy and to have a connection with Him.

Read Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 9:18; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 12:24; Hebrews 13:12; and Hebrews 13:20. These verses are about Christ's blood and the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices. What do they teach us about each?

Christ's blood does not refer to His life. It instead is a symbol of His death as man's Substitute. It also describes the power of that death and how it was meant to work in our behalf (for us). And Christ's spilled blood does serve many purposes. Christ's blood symbolizes (stands for) eternal salvation through His sacrifice. Christ's blood gives cleansing from sin and offers forgiveness. Christ's blood offers sanctification (righteous living) and is the reason for the resurrection (return to life).

The book of Hebrews explains a powerful difference: Christ's blood is better than any other blood. No other blood can really offer forgiveness. Christ's death is the only reason sins are forgiven, before and after the Cross (Hebrews 9:15). Therefore, the spilling of Christ's blood is clear proof that Christ died as our Substitute. It means that Jesus took the penalty that we deserve.

How should an understanding of Christ's death help to free us from thinking that our own works can save us?



Blood was the only way to receive God's mercy and forgiveness.

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 13

SPOTLESS (PERFECT) SACRIFICE (Exodus 12:5)

What requirements does a sacrificial (meant to be used as an offering) animal need to meet? Read Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 3:1; and Leviticus 4:3.

The choice of a sacrificial animal required great care. A person could not just take any animal for an offering. The animal needed to meet several requirements depending on the kind of offering.

But there is one standard (requirement) that all offerings had to meet. They had to be "unblemished [perfect]." The Hebrew word (*tamim*) for "unblemished" can also mean "complete," "unscathed [unspoiled]," "without fault," or "perfect." In other words, the original word shows the idea that something meets the highest standard (level) possible. Only

the best was good enough.

There is another important example of the word *unblemished* in the Bible. When it is used to describe people, it is used to mean that their relationship with God is “blameless [without fault]” (Genesis 6:9; Genesis 17:1, NASB).

How do Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 9:14; and 1 Peter 1:18, 19 describe Jesus? Why was it important that Jesus be sinless?

Jesus, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, NKJV), meets perfectly the Old Testament requirement of a spotless sacrifice. Jesus’ pure life showed Him to be a perfect sacrifice. This is the guarantee of our salvation. This is because only a Sinless One could bear (carry) our sin for us. And it is His perfect righteousness (holiness) that covers us, now and in the judgment. That righteousness is our hope of salvation.

Like the Hebrew word with the same meaning, the Greek word for “without blemish” (*amomos*) is used to describe Jesus and His flawless (perfect) sacrifice. It also describes the holy lives of Jesus’ followers.

“By comparing their lives with Christ’s character [who He is], the followers will be able to see where they have failed to meet the requirements of God’s holy law. Then they will try to make themselves perfect in their world even as God is perfect in His world.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Paulson Letters*, page 374.

Through Christ’s death and His ministry (work), we are blameless before God (Jude 24). This is possible only because the Blameless One stands in our place.

Why can the concept of being holy and blameless cause people to feel uneasy? How can the knowledge that Christ is our Substitute help you to accept that you are “holy,” too? How should our new position as a Christian influence the way in which we live?



The sacrifice had to be perfect as Jesus was perfect.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 14

A GREAT DANGER (Hebrews 6:4–6)

In the book of Hebrews, Paul focuses on (pays attention to) the biblical understanding of Christ’s sacrifice. He also explains some of the Bible’s useful hints. And at several places Paul shows what happens if someone ignores this sacrifice.

Read Hebrews 6:4–6 and Hebrews 10:26–31. About what is Paul warning us? What kinds of attitudes (feelings) does he describe?

In the book of Hebrews, Paul shows how wonderful God’s salvation is and how God has shown Himself to us. Paul also shows what God has done and is doing for believers. But there is at least one main problem that Paul has to discuss. It is the danger that Christ’s sacrifice could slowly be taken for granted.⁵ He describes such a danger as “drift[ing] [floating] away” from the goal (Hebrews 2:1, NKJV). Paul’s words give us the picture of a ship that is wandering off course (proper direction) and does not arrive at the desired port. The goal is to stay on course.

But some choose not to accept God. This means that their life after receiving the gospel is the same as it was before they received it. Those people do not have any effective sacrifice for their sins (Hebrews 10:26–31). It does seem that not many believers would refuse to accept Christ’s sacrifice in such a way or even think about doing such a thing. Still, Paul sounds a warning. The real danger of neglect (uncaring attitude) and failure, though, is that it often happens very slowly. The change may not be noticeable. Slowly, the work of Christ is not appreciated enough. It is the same way with Esau’s failure to appreciate his birthright (Hebrews 12:15–17). Christ’s sacrifice should

never be thought of as so common that we think of it as not important.

Paul does not want to make his readers fearful. But he needs to show them the results of turning away from God. He does not want such a thing to happen. On the positive side, Paul encourages his readers to “hold fast” all the good things of salvation (Hebrews 3:6, 14; Hebrews 10:23). He also wants them to keep their eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

What about yourself? Have you simply become “used to” the wonderful truth about the Cross? Why is this such a terrible thing to do? How can we protect ourselves from the danger that Paul warns us about in this lesson?

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 15

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “The Atonement, Part I—Atoning Sacrifice,” pages 457–476, in Appendix C of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7A.

Martin Luther often spoke of a “wonderful exchange” or “joyous exchange” of Christ’s righteousness (holiness) for human sin. In much the same way, Ellen G. White describes it very well: “Christ was treated as we deserve so that we might be treated as He deserves. He was punished for our sins so that we might be forgiven and made righteous [holy]. Jesus also suffered the death which was ours so that we might receive the life

5. taken for granted—when we do something so often we might treat it as common or not important.

which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed.' ”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 25.

“Only the death of Christ could make His love effective 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 put our faith.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 660.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Some do not like the idea of Jesus as our Sacrifice. They think it makes God sound bloodthirsty (cruel), like the pagan (non-Christian) gods of the past. What is so wrong with this understanding about the Cross? How do the ideas of death, sacrifice, and blood help to show us just how seri-

ous sin and its results are? How should this understanding about the cost of sin help us to look for God's power to put sin out of our lives?

❷ Some people struggle with the issue of works and how they relate to salvation. How can remembering Christ's death as our Substitute help to protect us from falling into the trap of salvation by works? After all, what could our works add to what Christ has done for us by dying in our place?

❸ Ellen G. White said it would be good to spend a thoughtful hour every day thinking about the life of Jesus, especially His last days. How could doing this help us to strengthen our relationship with Christ? Also, how could it help us better appreciate what He has done for us?