

# God as Redeemer<sup>1</sup>



## SABBATH—JANUARY 14

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Romans 1:18; Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20; 1 Peter 1:19; Mark 10:32–45; Matthew 27:46.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘The Lamb, who was put to death, is worthy! He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength! He is worthy to receive honor and glory and praise!’ ” (Revelation 5:12, NlrV).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** The Triune (Three-in-One) God is not only our Creator. He is our Redeemer too.

**GOD IS OUR CREATOR.** He also is our Redeemer. Sin is so bad that only the Creator Himself could solve the problem. And He did, in the person of Jesus Christ.

“At one time you were far away from God. But now you belong to Christ Jesus. He spilled his blood for you. That has brought you near to God” (Ephesians 2:13, NlrV). We are not brought near to God through our works. We are not saved through anything we could ever do. It is only through God’s grace<sup>2</sup> that we as sinners can be redeemed (saved) by the Lord and brought near to Him. Christ accepted God’s punishment so that none of us would ever have to be punished. That is the plan of salvation.

Paul also tells the church in Corinth that “the message of the cross seems foolish to those who are lost and dying. But it is God’s power to us who are being saved” (1 Corinthians 1:18, NlrV). The Cross seems so foolish to human thinking: the Eternal God, our Holy Creator, becomes a sacrifice for the sake of imperfect human souls, even His enemies. He takes upon Himself the punishment for their sins so that they would not have to face that punishment themselves! This is hard to understand, yes? The sacrifice is so deep that it is hard to understand. When understanding stops, all we can do is worship.

1. Redeemer—Jesus is our Redeemer. He paid the price for our sins on the cross, so that we might have eternal life.

2. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

**SUNDAY—JANUARY 15****AT THE CROSS (Romans 5:8)****What is Romans 5:8 saying to us?**

At the Cross, God has victory over and shames the enemy. Love, justice, and mercy join together in one wonderful act. God forgives sinners by paying with Himself the price of sin and taking into His own suffering Self the punishment of that sin. On the cross, God shows how expensive forgiveness is.

Christ did not die in order to create love in God's heart for us. No, Jesus says that the Father's love is the reason for the forgiveness of sins, not the result of that forgiveness (John 3:16, 17). God does not love us because Christ died for us. Christ died for us because God loves us. The sacrifice of Christ was not offered to open the way for the Father to love those whom He would have hated. The death of Christ did not bring forth a love that was not already there. Instead, it was an example of the love that was always in God's heart. Jesus never had to tell the Father to love us. Notice how Jesus tries to point to this truth in John 3:16, 17 and John 16:26, 27.

What is so sad is that we have lost much of the knowledge of God. We have sinned against Him. We do not even feel that we have much to be sorry for. This is because we are not always sure about just how much we have hurt God with our sins. Our hearts can become hardened to just how bad sin really is. Also, sin does

not make many of us angry as it once did. For these reasons, perhaps it becomes harder to understand how angry sin makes our Holy God.

**Paul is not afraid to discuss God's anger. How does Paul explain it in Romans 1:18?**

Paul's strong statement opens the way for the long description of how serious the influence of sin is. It is so serious, in fact, that the discussion on sin continues for the next two chapters (through Romans 3:20).

It is a surprise to learn from the gospel that God both wins the war over our sin and suffers from it. Because God both wins and suffers, He can keep His promise with sinful believers. God's love does not lead to a weak acceptance of sin and evil but to His having great victory over them. It is because God is love that He opposes the sin and evil that destroy His beloved children. The death that God went through on the cross is the price His love pays for taking sin seriously while still loving sinners.

**How seriously do you take the sin in your life? And what reason do you use for making your decision?**

**At the Cross God shows how expensive forgiveness is.**

**MONDAY—JANUARY 16****THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Genesis 3:15)**

**According to Genesis 3:15, when is the first promise of salvation given? And what does it mean?**

The language here is very impressive. Adam and Eve have sinned. Now the great war between Christ and Satan is announced to Adam and Eve through the strong word of “enmity.”<sup>3</sup> There is enmity between Christ and Satan. This verse is an important promise for our human hearts that are now “hooked” by sin. We are also promised that this great war will not be eternal. This is because the enemy (Satan) will one day be crushed. This verse also shows us how the great war between Christ and Satan is going to end.

**Paul took courage from Genesis 3:15. How does he explain it in Romans 16:20? What point is Paul making?**



**One day Satan, the enemy, will be crushed.**

**In Genesis 22:1–19, Moses also tells a powerful story of sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> What can we learn about the future sacrifice of Christ from this story?**

Note how many times in the Abraham and Isaac story that Abraham is referred to as “father” and Isaac as “son.” Note how they go to the mountain of sacrifice together. The son carries the wood, and the father carries the instruments of sacrifice (fire and knife). Isaac is much younger than his father and could overpower Abraham on the mountain of sacrifice. But we read of two miracles instead: the father is willing to give up his son, and the son is willing to give up his life.



**On Mount Moriah the father is willing to give up his son, and the son is willing to give up his life.**

What a powerful example of the sacrifice of Christ for our sake. The scene is powerful and moving. But it is only a preview of what would happen many

3. enmity—the feeling between two people or two groups who are enemies. In the Bible, Christ and Satan are great enemies.

4. sacrifice—something that is given wholly or completely; an offering that holds nothing back.

hundreds of years later. Another Father would offer His Son. But this time, there would be no animal to die instead of the Son. The Son Himself would die on the altar. The Father would truly give up His Son. And the Son would give His life.

There, on Mount Moriah, the world is presented with a very powerful picture (but still only a picture) of the plan of salvation and what it will cost to bring back fallen humans from the ruin of sin.

## TUESDAY—JANUARY 17

### SALVATION IN ISAIAH (Isaiah 53)

**On the famous road to Emmaus, Jesus taught the two discouraged disciples about sacrifice for sin. He began His teachings by stating, “Moses and all the prophets”<sup>5</sup> (Luke 24:27). What prophecies<sup>6</sup> might Jesus have included in His study of His sacrifice?**

It is very likely that Isaiah was one of the prophets Jesus named.

**Read Isaiah 53, which describes the “Suffering Servant.” Describe the details included there that help you to more fully understand the wonderful sacrifice of Christ.**

There is so much in this chapter. But one point stands out more than anything else. This is the work of the Suffering Servant as our Substitute. Notice all the times that He is paying the price for the sins of others. Again

5. prophets—spokespersons for God.

6. prophecies—special messages from God, often explaining what will happen in the future.

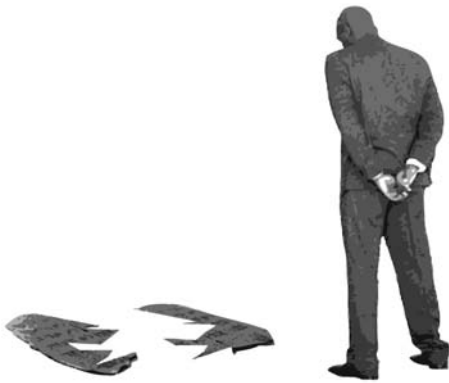
and again this theme appears. What it teaches is that the death of Jesus for our sins is at the heart of salvation. As sinners who have broken God’s law, we can do nothing to make ourselves right with God. All our good works cannot bridge (bring together) the separation between us and God. The only way to save us was for Jesus to pay the price in our place on the cross and then offer us His perfect life, which we claim by faith.

If our works would have made us right with God in any way, then Jesus would not have had to die for us. But He did have to die because nothing less than His death could have paid the price for our sins. This truth should be all the proof we need that we cannot earn our salvation by ourselves. Instead, it is God’s gift of grace to us.

**Read 1 Peter 1:19 and 1 Peter 2:21–25. How does Peter use Isaiah 53 to explain Christ’s sacrifice for our sakes?**

Isaiah 53 gives the clearest explanation of the Cross in the Bible. It shows Christ dying for our sakes. He accepts upon Himself the punishment we deserve.

**Read Isaiah 53 as you think about the final scenes of Christ’s life. As you do, keep in mind that the Person there is our God, our Creator, and One part of the Godhead Himself. How can we more fully understand this wonderful truth?**



As sinners who have broken God's law, we can do nothing to make ourselves right with God.

### WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 18

#### THE GOSPELS<sup>7</sup> AND THE CROSS (Mark 10:32–45)

Christ's coming into this world as a Man was a miracle. His teachings were deep, and He did many miracles. But these are not the most important focus (point) of Christ's life. Instead, the most important focus of Jesus' thinking is the giving of His life. Jesus' birth and work on earth were miracles. But the greatest mission (important work) of Christ's life was His death.

In the four Gospels, we find Jesus trying to prepare His disciples for His coming death. But their loyalty to Jesus and their hope for a king on earth keep them from understanding what Jesus is telling them.

**According to Mark 10:32–45, how did Jesus describe His coming death? What did James and John ask Jesus for? Why was it wrong? What was Jesus' answer?**

The evening before He died, Jesus

celebrated a Passover meal (the Last Supper) with His disciples. Jesus then gave instructions that this event should be celebrated from time to time until He returned again. This means that the Lord's Supper was started by the Lord Himself. And it was the only service He authorized (commanded) the churches to celebrate. It does not honor His birth as a human or His miracles. It does not honor His parables<sup>8</sup> or His preaching. It celebrates only His death. In other words, Christ Himself wished His death to be remembered above everything else.

In fact, all the four Gospel stories point to the Messiah's (Chosen One's) crucifixion (death on the cross). But the wonderful miracle of His birth as a human is recorded only in Matthew and Luke. Only two chapters in each of their Gospels record Christ's birth. Mark and John do not comment on Christ's birth at all. They begin their Gospels with Jesus as an adult.

But all four Gospel writers focus on the last week of Christ's life and death. If you read through the Gospels, you will notice that the last week of Jesus' life and death takes up from one-third to almost a half of all Gospel stories. Each reader is forced to pay attention to the great redeeming (saving) act of God's Son on the cross.

**Think about your life: your past, your mistakes, your sins. Do you honestly think that anything you have done by yourself could forgive or erase (remove) them? Why, then, should the death of Jesus**

7. Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

8. parables—stories that teach a lesson or a truth.

**for your sake be the most important point of your life? What hope would you have without it?**

### **THURSDAY—JANUARY 19**

#### **THE CRY ON THE CROSS (Matthew 27:46)**

Nothing can destroy our understanding of the sacrifice of Christ more than an idea that belittles the value of the Cross. We must always admit that anything we say about God can never do God justice, especially when we speak about His sacrifice. We must avoid the temptation to make Jesus' death on the cross less important by saying it is just an example of selfless love. Yes, it is still such an example. But when we think of our situation as sinners, it would take more than an example of selfless love to save us. Instead, it would take our God's accepting in Himself the full measure of His own punishment against sin.

**On the cross, Jesus cried out, “ ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken [left] Me?’ ” (Matthew 27:46, NKJV). How are we to understand this? What was Jesus saying? Why? And how does this cry help us to understand what it cost to save us from sin?**

“And now the Lord of Glory<sup>9</sup> was dying. He was a ransom<sup>10</sup> for all human sinners. . . . Upon Christ as our Substitute was laid the sins of us

all. He was counted a law-breaker that He might save us from the punishment of the law. . . . The Savior could not see if His death was good enough to be accepted by God as a sacrifice for sin. . . . He feared that sin was so terrible to God that Their separation was to be eternal. . . . Sin brought the Father's punishment upon Jesus as our Substitute. It was this sense of sin that made the cup Jesus drank so bitter and broke the heart of the Son of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 752, 753.

In His prayer, Jesus spoke to “God” instead of to the “Father,” as He always had done. Christ's cries from the cross are not just an example of what He appears to have gone through to show that He loves us. No, this is God giving Himself over to death so that our future would not be ended by eternal death. This is God Himself dying the death so that we would not need to go through it. It was the death that sin would have brought to us if Christ had not died on the cross in our place. Three Gospels show that Jesus cried out with a loud voice from the cross as He was dying. These loud cries are even described in the book of Hebrews: “Jesus prayed while he lived on earth. He made his appeal [prayer] with loud cries and tears. He prayed to the One who could save him from death” (Hebrews 5:7, NIV). Jesus' cry of despair (hopelessness) is the most painful cry in the Bible. There is no sentence in all the Gospels equal to this one of Jesus from the cross. And in that cry we get

9. glory—great power, beauty, and royal perfection.

10. ransom—money paid for the return of a kidnapped person. Christ's death on the cross paid a ransom for all sinners.

an example of what the Lord Himself was willing to go through in order to save us.

### FRIDAY—JANUARY 20

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Oh, how I feel barely able to explain the things which burn in my soul about the mission of Christ! . . . I know not how to speak about or describe with pen the important subject of Christ’s cleansing sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I shake with fear that I shall not do justice in language to the great plan of salvation.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, page 115.

“The unlimited mercy and love of Jesus, the sacrifice made for our sakes, requires our most serious thoughts. We should think deeply about the character [holy life] of our dear Savior. . . . As we think about the deep things of God and Jesus, our faith and love will grow stronger. And our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God. This is because they will be more and more mixed with faith and love. They will become wiser and warmer in feeling. There will be stronger faith in Jesus and a daily, living experience in His power to save all that come unto God by Him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 89.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ In the Bible, God is pictured both as a great Lover of sinners and also as being very angry about sin. Some

Christians try to pick one or the other as showing God’s nature (who God is). Why is that unnecessary? In fact, why is God’s love for sinners one of the main reasons why He is angry about sin?

❷ God’s love is not like the weak human love that we have for one another. What does Christ’s act as Savior teach us about God’s deep love?

❸ God’s love and holiness are very much opposed to our sinfulness. How does this truth help you to better understand why our salvation cost so much?

❹ Think more deeply about the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. How does it help us to understand more fully Christ’s sacrifice for our sakes? At the same time, in what ways does it fail to do justice to what Christ has done for us through His sacrifice on the cross?

**SUMMARY:** From the earliest pages of Genesis, the Bible points us to the death of Christ on the cross. There He would die a sinner’s death in order to save us from eternal death. The Bible uses different symbols and metaphors (word-pictures) to explain Christ’s death. But at the center of it all is His sacrifice as our Substitute, which is so clearly described in Isaiah 53. If we ever needed proof that works could not save us, we have it with the death of God Himself on the cross. After all, what could sinful humans ever do to improve on that?