

## God Substitutes Himself

**Matthew 27:45-54** Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

**Big Idea:** God rescued us by substituting Himself for us.

### **The Need for Sacrifice**

Like most ancient cultures, the Old Testament documents that sacrifices were necessary and regular for God's people Israel. It was thought by many that animal, and sometimes human, sacrifices were required to give to the gods in order to appease their anger. It was thought that their anger is what caused disasters, famines, barrenness, and military defeats. The gods were unstable, insecure, jealous, and even envious of some humans, and this was the source of the world's problems. Thus, sacrifices were offered in order to gain favor with particular gods.

The Old Testament paints quite a different picture. It is not God who is needy or unstable, and thus flies off the handle, but it is humans that have this problem. Humans are the wayward ones and scheme against God, not the other way around. God is holy, we are profane. The question in the Old Testament becomes how can this God dwell in the presence of His people if they are not holy? If He came in His holiness to be among them, it would kill them. Thus God prescribed a system of sacrifice in order to allow His glory to be with Israel. The book of Leviticus lays this out, climaxing in the Day of Atonement.

Name of Sacrifice	Types of Animal	Hand-laying	Use of Blood	Priestly Portions	Lay Portions
Burnt	Cattle, sheep, goats, birds	Yes	Poured on altar sides	No	No
Peace	Cattle, sheep, goats	Yes	Poured on altar sides	Yes	Yes
Sin	Cattle, sheep, goats, birds	Yes	Smeared on altars, sprinkled inside tent	Yes, usually	No
Guilt	Rams	Probably	Poured on altar sides	Yes	No

**Leviticus 16:11-14** "Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. 12 And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil 13 and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die. 14 And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

*Why would God want to dwell with humans?*

*Was this designed to be a permanent solution? Are there shortcomings with this system?*

### **Jesus is the true Passover and the Day of Atonement**

God's people faced a significant problem with the sacrificial system – they neglected it and worshipped other gods along with "Yahweh". Thus, God's glory departed from Israel. As long as it depended upon the people, it could not last. So the system itself proves a point – if God is going to dwell with His people forever, it requires a permanent sacrifice. We could never have guessed that the permanent sacrifice would be no less than God himself. In fact, Jesus' followers could not handle that God intended to substitute Himself in the place of sinners. But it makes perfect sense from God's perspective: only an infinite, eternal person could be a suitable substitute for people deserving infinite, eternal judgment.

**John 1:29** "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

**1 Corinthians 5:7** Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

**Romans 3:21-26** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**What does it mean that Jesus atones for sin:**

1) *Jesus offered Himself* (he wasn't forced against His will)

**John 10:14-18** I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and *I lay down my life for the sheep*. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

2) *Jesus' died in our place as a substitute for us* (he wasn't an example of martyrdom)

**1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

**Galatians 1:3-5** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

**Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

3) *Jesus satisfied God's wrath for us* (it wasn't Satan's wrath)

**Matthew 27:46** And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**Romans 3:24-25** are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

4) *Jesus fulfilled the Law for us* (he took the punishment God's Law requires that sinners deserve)

**Romans 5:18-19** Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

5) *God will not condemn us for our sins* (there is no "double jeopardy")

**Romans 5:6-9** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

**Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:9-10** For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

**Romans 8:32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God rescued us by substituting Himself for us.