

Understanding What Jesus Did for Us



SABBATH—MAY 3

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 1:2–15; Hebrews 10:3–10; Exodus 12:1–11; Haggai 2:7–9; Revelation 4:7–11.

MEMORY VERSE: “And they all sang a new song to the Lamb: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll [rolled up book] and to open its seals [locks], because you were killed, and with your blood sacrifice [offering] you bought people for God from every tribe [family group], language, race [group] of people, and nation [country]’ ” (Revelation 5:9, ERV).



Jesus was God's Lamb who was killed for our sins.

WHEN JESUS CAME TO JOHN THE BAPTIST, John announced: “‘Look, the Lamb of God. He takes away [removes] the sins of the world [people everywhere]!’ ” (John 1:29, ERV). John's words helped the people remember the idea of animal offerings. The Jewish priests or spiritual leaders offered these animals to God for the sins of the people. The Jewish priests killed the animals as offerings to God. The dead animals showed the work Jesus came to do on the cross for everyone.

Animal offerings are an important part of the Bible's teachings. Animal offerings are an important part of the book of Revelation, too. We see this Bible truth when John visits God's throne room in heaven (Revelation 4 and 5). There, John sees Jesus. To John, Jesus looks the same as a dead lamb (Revelation 5:6). This word picture helps us understand Jesus' work for us in Revelation 4 and 5.

This week, we will look at animal offerings in the Bible and what they teach us about Jesus. Jesus was God's Lamb who was killed for our sins.

USELESS OFFERINGS? (Isaiah 1:2–15)

Sometimes comparing two ideas can help us understand a topic better. We can learn a lot about the offerings in the Bible that God accepted when we study the offerings that God rejected.

Compare Isaiah 1:2–15 with Isaiah 56:6, 7 and Psalm 51:17. What important lessons about offerings do these verses teach us?

These verses talk about an experience in Israel's history when God rejected an offering. But this experience was not the first time that happened. Something much the same happened near the beginning of human history. God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. This story lets us compare offerings that God accepted with offerings that He rejected. (Read Genesis 4:3–7 and Hebrews 11:4.)

In Isaiah's time, the Israelites did some of the things that they thought pleased God. At the same time, they also lived the way they pleased. Their offerings were selfish, just as Cain's were. The Israelites didn't give their lives to God or obey Him fully.

The same spirit fills the kingdoms on this earth today: people want to control their lives and don't want God to be in charge. Cain lived as he pleased. He offered God the gifts that he wanted to give, and not the ones God asked for.

Abel gave God dead animals as offerings. The killed animal that Abel offered the Lord showed his faith in God's promise to send a Savior, God's Lamb. Abel's offering showed the saving act of Jesus on the cross at Calvary.

"Abel understood the important rules about God's saving plan. Abel saw himself as a sinner. He also understood the price for sin was death. Sin stood between Abel and his communication with God. Abel understood these Bible truths, so he gave His animal offering to God. In this way, Abel accepted that he broke God's law. The animal's spilled blood filled Abel with hope and helped him to look to Jesus' future offering on the cross. Abel trusted in Jesus' future offering. God announced that Abel was holy and accepted his offering."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 72, adapted.



God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's.

THE BLOOD FROM BULLS AND GOATS (Hebrews 10:3–10)

Some people say that the idea of offerings is mean, ugly, and not fair. Of course it's not fair. Jesus' death on the cross wasn't fair. He, the innocent, died for the guilty. There's nothing fair about that. But that's what God needed to do to solve the sin problem. All those mean, ugly offerings that weren't fair showed us Jesus' future death on the cross.

Read Hebrews 10:3–10. What do these verses teach us about the offerings that God's people gave in the Old Testament? If these offerings didn't save sinners, then why did the people offer them?



These animal offerings were acts of faith. The sinner gave them to show he had faith in the work of the coming Savior.

The lambs and other animal offerings were word pictures. They showed the future death of Jesus for our sins. These animal offerings were acts of faith. The sinner gave them to show he had faith in the work of the coming Savior. Another name for these word pictures is types. When the real thing happens or appears, we name that the antitype. So, the Lamb is the type or word picture of the coming Savior. Jesus, the real Lamb, is the antitype.

The Old Testament offerings can be compared to paying for a trip. When you buy a train or bus ticket, you don't get the trip you paid for right away. You get a ticket. The ticket is a symbol or word picture for the future trip. You can sit on that piece of paper or ticket all you want. But it won't take you where you want to go. But when you get on the bus or the train, the trip starts. You get what you paid for. You don't need the paper ticket anymore.

In the same way, animal offerings were important. But when Jesus, the real Lamb, died for our sins, the offerings were useless. That's why the curtain between the Holy Room and the Most Holy Room was torn in half, from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). All the animal offerings showed the future death of Jesus on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross and woke up from the dead, the types or animal offerings were no longer needed.

Think about how bad sin must be if only the death of Jesus can pay for it. Jesus is the living Word of God (read John 1:1–3, 14). What should this idea tell us about how bad sin is?

JESUS, THE LAMB OF GOD (Exodus 12:1–11)

The book of Revelation says that Jesus is the Lamb almost 30 times. From earliest times, God's people used lambs as symbols of the coming Savior. Abel offered God the animal born first in his flock (Genesis 4:4). Before the Israelites left Egypt, God commanded them to buy back every person or animal that was born first. How much did this cost? The price was a one-year old lamb (Exodus 12:5).

Read Exodus 12:1–11; Isaiah 53:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 5:7; and Revelation 5:6. What do these verses teach us about Jesus, our Passover offering? Passover was the time when God helped His people escape slavery in Egypt. What does it mean that Jesus is our Passover offering?

Years after Jesus died, woke up from the grave, and went to heaven, Peter wrote about what happened. He said, "You know that in the past you were living in a worthless [useless] way. You got that way of living from the people who lived before you. But you were saved from that useless life. You were bought, but not with something that ruins like [the same as] gold or silver. You were bought with the precious blood of the death of Christ, who was like a pure [innocent; holy] and perfect lamb" (1 Peter 1:18, 19, ICB).

Jesus lived a perfect, holy life. God accepted this life as an offering for our sins.

Jesus became the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). Where we failed, Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus was everything we were meant to be. Jesus showed us God's perfect glory. That's why Jesus told Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, NIV).

Jesus was nailed to the cross on Passover. Jesus' death showed that He was the real Lamb that all the animal offerings in the past promised. In John 18:20, Jesus said, "I have spoken openly to everyone. I have always taught in synagogues [Jewish church] and in the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I never said anything in secret" (ICB). In the same way, the Israelites chose a lamb for Passover and kept it or put it where people could see it before it was killed. When the Jewish priests or spiritual leaders asked Jesus about His teachings, Jesus said that He showed Himself in public in the temple for everyone to see. Jesus' life, His works, and His teachings all showed that He was God's perfect Lamb.



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JESUS AT THE TEMPLE (Haggai 2:7–9)

God wants to communicate with us the way that He did in the past before Adam and Eve sinned. God wants to be close to us in His heart. But if God allowed sinners to come be with Him, His shining glory would destroy them. That's why David says, "For you, God, aren't happy with anything that is evil. Those [people] who do what is wrong can't live where you are" (Psalm 5:4, NIV). At the same time, David also writes, "Because of your great [amazing] love, I can come into your Temple. Because I fear and respect you, I can worship in your holy Temple" (Psalm 5:7, ICB).

Read Haggai 2:7–9. As the second temple was being built, God's special messenger Haggai made a surprising promise: the new temple would be more wonderful than the last one. What did Haggai mean?



**The God who made heaven
made Himself small
as a man to live with us
on this earth.
Then He died for us.**

After Solomon built the first temple, God's glory filled the temple. The priests or spiritual leaders couldn't stay in the temple to finish their work. They needed to leave (1 Kings 8:10, 11). After the second temple was built, God didn't fill the temple with His glory. That's because the ark of God's promise was missing from the temple. The ark was a symbol of God's throne. God's servants hid the ark in a cave before the first temple was destroyed. So, the Jews were sad. How, then, could Haggai's promise come true?

Haggai's promise happened when Jesus, who was God in a human body, came in Person to the temple. Jesus became one of us and joined us in living on this sin-filled earth. Jesus, the Son of God, became the Son of man. People saw His face. They heard His voice. They saw Him touch the leper and make him clean (Matthew 8:3). A leper was a person with a terrible skin disease. God didn't bring us closer to Him. God came down to us in person. No wonder the Bible says about Jesus: "The young woman, who has never had a man, will give birth to a Son. They will give Him the name Immanuel. This means God with us" (Matthew 1:23, NIV). Think about what "God with us" really means. The God who made heaven made Himself small as a man to live with us on this earth. Then He died for us.

The Cross is the most powerful example of God's love. What other things show us God's love?

YOU MADE EVERYTHING! (Revelation 4:7–11)

A handful of prophets or special messengers were allowed to see God on His throne. Ezekiel saw God's throne above the sky (Ezekiel 1:26). In a dream, Isaiah visited the temple in heaven to see God's throne (Isaiah 6:1). In the book of Revelation, John was taken in a dream to heaven (Revelation 4 and 5). The Old Testament types or symbols showed that God made one path for us to Him: the blood of Jesus. (Read Leviticus 16:2–14.)

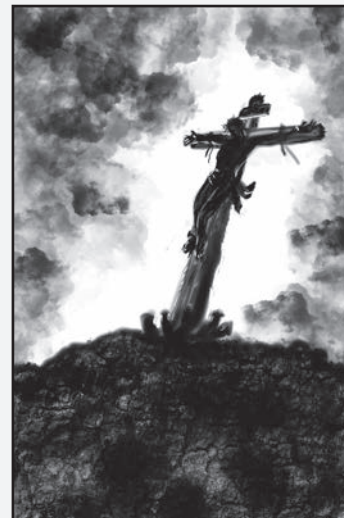
Read about the dreams that Isaiah and John had in Isaiah 6:1–5 and Revelation 4:7–11. How are these two dreams the same? Pay attention to what happens first. What comes next? What Bible truth do these dreams teach us about God?

In each of these dreams about God's temple in heaven, the first thing that happens is that people from heaven say that God is very holy. In Isaiah's dream, the temple is filled with smoke. The door posts shake when angels announce that God is holy. In John's dream, the angels make the same announcement, " 'Holy, holy, holy' " (Revelation 4:8, ERV). (Also read Ezekiel 10:14, 15, which talks about the living things that are much the same as angels.) Both John and Isaiah saw an amazing scene of God's glory.

Then we see what each prophet says and does after He sees God's glory. Isaiah says that he is not clean enough to talk to God (Isaiah 6:5). John cries because no one can be found who is worthy to open the locked book (Revelation 5:4). When we remember that God is holy, we start to understand our problem: we are worthless. We need Jesus to save us.

Satan accuses God of many terrible things. Satan says that God is selfish and mean. But John and Isaiah's dreams show us that Satan's words are lies. We must see Jesus as the Lamb who was killed for our sins (Revelation 5:12). When we do, we will see the Father as He really is: a God of love. This understanding will give us hope. Jesus shows us who the Father really is (John 14:9). The most powerful example of God's love is Jesus' death for us on the cross.

The cross shows us two things: first, God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die for us. Second, the cross shows us that we are sinners. God saves us only because Jesus died on the cross.



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“The law is as holy as God is holy. So only someone who was the same as God could make an offering for our sins against God.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: The Bible says that Jesus is the only One who is worthy enough to save us. He is the only person who lived without sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God. Now He goes to God to save us. Jesus accepted the punishment for our sins. He paid the price for our breaking God’s law. John is told to stop crying because “ ‘the Lion [Jesus] from the tribe [family group] of Judah has won’ ” (Revelation 5:5, ERV).

Also, think about sin. Sin is very bad, isn’t it? Humans are terrible sinners in need of a Savior. That’s why only the death of Jesus, who is God, could solve the sin problem. For sure, if God could save us some other way, He would do it.

“People broke God’s law. The sinner must die for breaking the law. In all of heaven and on earth, only one person could make things right again. The law is as holy as God is holy. So only someone who was the same as God could make an offering for our sins against God. Only Jesus could save people from the punishment of the law and bring us back to God. Jesus accepted the guilt and shame of our sins. God hates sin so much. Sin separated the Father and His Son. Jesus suffered so much to save people from sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 63, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① John sees the Lamb enter the temple in heaven. The Lamb looks as if He was killed in the past. The Bible says, “The Lamb is the one whose death was planned before the world was created [made]” (Revelation 13:8, NIV). So, the plan to save us was already ready before we needed it. What can we learn about God from this idea?
- ② Many people believe that God doesn’t care about us. The Bible tells us something different. God loves us so much that He sent His Son to save us. Jesus died on the cross for us. How should the cross change our lives and everything we do?
- ③ What did it cost God to save us? What does the price tell us about how bad sin really must be?

A CRY FOR HELP: PART 2

Diana spent the whole summer going to parties after she finished high school. She stayed up late at night, drinking and smoking. At the end of the summer, she felt tired and sick. Then she went alone to a park in Monte Vista, Colorado. Diana looked up at the sunlight in the trees. At that moment, Diana heard a voice say, "If you don't leave here, you will die here." Diana knew that the voice was saying she needed to get away if she wanted to live.

Diana talked with her mother about the future. Her mother asked, "What about joining the Navy?" Diana thought this idea was silly. But three months later, she joined the Navy and went to Orlando, Florida, for training. After her training, Diana sailed all over the globe. She saw many things that upset her. Every seaport was filled with gambling, people who sold their bodies for sex in exchange for pay, and much worse.

Soon, Diana met and married a sailor. She left the Navy and had three sons. Diana and her family moved to Monte Vista, Colorado, but Diana's husband wasn't happy with family life.

Diana became very sad. She wanted to die. At first, she wanted to get sick and die. Then, she thought about killing herself. She felt hopeless. She prayed, "God, I believe You are real. But I don't know where You are."

Strange things started to happen. Diana talked with people from four different faith groups. First, two young Bible workers came to her door. Diana let them into her house. One of the Bible workers opened a book and read a verse that said people with dark skin were cursed. So, they couldn't go to heaven to live with God. Diana was very upset. As a child, she was the only white child in her class at school. That was during a time when the state of Virginia made a law that said that forcing black people to stay separate from white people was illegal. Diana knew that God loved everyone from every race group. So, she told the Bible workers, "You need to leave."

The next day, three women came to her house. During their visit, Diana asked them about the Sabbath. One of the women answered, "We worship God every day." Diana thought this idea was correct. So, she agreed to allow the women to visit again.

Then, a tiny old woman knocked on her door on a stormy Friday night. The woman was collecting money to help people who suffered from natural disasters. Diana gave her the money she saved in a tip jar from her job at Pizza Hut. Diana never saw the woman again. The same weekend, a friend invited Diana to church. Diana felt something evil in the church, so she ran out after the sermon.

Read more about Diana next week.

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**"If you don't leave here,
you will die here."**