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The Substitutionary Death of Jesus: Fact or Fiction?

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Many people accept the theory that Jesus died as a substitute for us, rather than as a sacrifice offering for our sins. There is a vast difference. We shall begin by emphasizing that difference.

First, a substitute is not simply dying in our stead. Rather the theory declares that Jesus took upon himself, personally, the actual sin and its guilt, of every sin that had ever been, or ever could be committed by the total human race. This would have the effect of offering a sacrifice, not to atone for our sins when applied, but to act as a buffer so that our sins would never be imputed to us so as to make us accountable for them. It is in this way that the perseverance of the saints is defended. If Jesus took upon himself the sin we commit, then it would be double jeopardy for God to also hold us accountable for that sin. They use this theory to teach that regardless of how often and grievously a saint sins, that the sinner is never held accountable for the sins. This flies in the face of all the Scripture.

Reasons Why This Theory Is False

1. The act of Christ upon the cross perfected the Old Testament saints, Hebrews 11:40. Yet, God held them accountable for their sins. Why else were they carried captive into Assyria and Babylon? The Old Testament clearly taught that the individual who sinned was held accountable for the sin committed, Ezekiel 18:18-22. The passage just referred to clearly teaches that if the

sinner is to escape his penalty, he must turn to God in the doing of the righteousness God commanded in order to escape. The New Testament teaches just as clearly that the person who sins must give an answer to God for his own sins, 2 Corinthians 5:10.

2. We in part base our conclusion on the fact that there has never been a blood offering made as a substitute for the sins of others. The Substitutionary Death of Jesus in Calvinism means that Jesus did, as set forth in the second paragraph of this article: he took upon himself every sin ever committed, or that can ever be committed by all of mankind; became a sinner accountable to God for his sins and died a sinner upon the cross, thus making it impossible for God to be just and at the same time impute to any saint any sin ever committed by that saint, because that would mean double jeopardy for the sinner. But this theory contradicts the fact that in all the Old Testament there was never such a sacrifice made with God's approval.

3. On the surface, this denies plain teaching of Scripture. First, God never imputes to any person any sin which that person did not commit. If Jesus died a sinner, then he must have committed sin. If Jesus was ever accountable to God for any sin, it was because Jesus committed that sin for which he was held accountable. But it is at this point that we see a conflict with plain passages. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:21-22 that Jesus did no sin. If he did no sin, and sin is imputed only to the one who committed the sin, then how could Jesus be guilty of any of our sins? Jesus died as a sin offering; not as a sinner condemned unclean! The same is declared in Hebrews 10:10-14. Jesus offered a sin offering; his own body upon the cross. Let us look at a logical clarification, and illustration of this truth.

All persons who are guilty of sin, are those persons who have committed acts of sin.

Jesus committed no sin, 1 Peter 2:21-22.

Therefore Jesus was never guilty of any sin.

The Substitutionary Sacrifice theory demands the conclusion that Jesus died a sinner, guilty of all the sins of all the world.

But the Bible concludes that Jesus was never guilty of any sin.

Therefore the Substitutionary Sacrifice theory demands a conclusion contradictory to basic conclusions demanded by God's word.

Any conclusion which demands a false conclusion (any conclusion contradictory to God's word is a false conclusion), is itself a false conclusion.

The Substitutionary Sacrifice theory is a theory which demands a false conclusion.

Therefore the Substitutionary Sacrifice theory is itself a false theory.

4. Jesus is the antitype of every blood offering for sin and trespasses commanded by God in the Old Testament. Check every blood sacrifice offered by God's commandment in the Old Testament, and you shall not find a mention of a substitutionary sacrifice for sins. It always took a blood sacrifice for sins, and without shedding of blood we are told in Hebrews 9:22 that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Jesus is the antitype in some way, of all those blood sacrifices offered for sins and trespasses in the Old Testament. The antitype is the same in some ways, but far greater in effects than the type. Therefore, without a substitutionary sacrifice in the Old Testament, Jesus could not be a substitutionary offering in the New Testament.

5. Jesus is plainly called our Passover in 1 Corinthians 5:7: "...for even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Please note: The passover blood was applied as a covering for sin; not as a substitute for the sinner. Jesus is of the same nature in that respect; an offering for sin. But as the passover sacrifice saved the eldest son in the household from physical death, the blood of Jesus applied will save any person who applies it from eternal death, or eternal separation from God. The passover lamb was slain for an offering for the Israelites who applied the blood properly, and

partook of the sacrifice itself. Christ our passover was slain as a universal offering for sin for any who applies his blood to their soul, and partakes of him in life. His blood covers the sins of those to whom it is applied. That covering is in the form of forgiveness in the absolute sense.

6. God assured Amos (3:7) that he would do nothing but that he would reveal it to his servants the prophets. In short, before God would undertake a new work. He would reveal that work through his prophets. This is a devastating blow to the Substitutionary Sacrifice theory in the view of a Bible believing person. Let us look at a clarification of this conclusion and observe a simple illustration.

God declared that he all he would ever do, that he would reveal it through his servants the prophets.

The concept of a Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ is completely unknown to any of the prophets.

Therefore the Substitutionary Sacrifice theory does not describe a work of God.

The simple conclusion is that if the teaching of the Substitutionary Sacrifice theory is not from God, then it must be the doctrine of devils or of man.

Calvinism claims credit for the theory of substitutionary Sacrifice. Therefore we must conclude that the teaching of a Substitutionary Sacrifice is of man and not God.

7. On the positive side of this matter, it was the prophet Isaiah who declared that God would make the Christ an offering for sin, Isaiah 53:10. Not a substitute sacrifice, but an offering for sin. God told the prophets what he was going to do, and he did it. We are told that we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus, not by a substitute sacrifice, Hebrews 10:10. We are told that it was by an offering, not a substitute sacrifice, by which he perfected those who are sanctified, Hebrews 10:14. Jesus willingly went to the cross as an offering for the sins of the world, not as a substitute

sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Jesus was sacrificed as an offering for the sins of the world, Hebrews 9:28. Jesus was made a sin offering by the sacrifice of himself, Hebrews 9:26. In none of this is it, nor can it be, even hinted at that Jesus was offered as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was made a sin offering, 2 Corinthians 5:21. The word offering is necessarily connected to sin in this passage by reason of the same teaching in both the Old and New Testaments. Yet some will take this one passage and assume that all contradictory teaching must be false even though supported by dozens of other passages. Common sense tells us that such a preposterous conclusion can never be right. The unclear teaching must always be interpreted by the clear teaching. To some whose knowledge of Scripture is blurred, 2 Corinthians 5:21 is unclear. Rather than jumping to a conclusion, they need to permit the many clear passages already mentioned to tell them what 2 Corinthians 5:21 actually means.

We must allow Scripture to tell us what sacrifice God offered for the sins of the world. In order to understand Scripture, we must allow clear teaching to interpret that which is unclear. We have set forth plain, clear teaching in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and in the New Testament concerning the fact that Jesus was made an offering for sin; a sin offering. He was not a sinful substitute who died on the cross paying the penalty for all sins ever possible to commit because he was guilty of those sins. Jesus died a sinless sacrifice offered for sin. If he died a sinner then God accepted a blemished sacrifice. That is totally unthinkable. All the blood sacrifices commanded in the Old Testament were to be without blemish and spot. Jesus, the great antitype of all those blood sacrifices offered for sin must be, not only without physical blemish, but his life must be free from all hint of sin. He challenged his critics: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?..." Not a one attempted to answer him. The only charges ever brought against him were either totally false charges, or charges falsely interpreted of a matter in which Jesus told the truth. None of this

even hints at the charge that Jesus personally took every sin possible to ever be committed and became guilty of every one of those sins, and died a sinner as a substitute for any sin you or I ever did or ever can commit.

Conclusion

Without becoming technical, we have fully answered the false theory that Jesus died guilty of sin and the penalty for sin. This totally devastates the theory of the perseverance of the saints in their TULIP acronym because it leaves no foundation for it. That theory that sin cannot be imputed to a saint, therefore a saint cannot fall in sin because that would be double jeopardy is based wholly upon the Substitutionary Sacrifice theory.

One little aside on brother Elliott's assignment is that if a saint can fall, what happens to the eternal election and damnation theory? If the saint can fall from grace, the eternal election and damnation theory is shot. If the saint can fall, and the sinner can turn, then where does that leave that theory? Now the doctrines begin to fall like a chain effect. In the end we shall see that there is no truth to any of their five cardinal doctrines, therefore every other conclusion based upon their TULIP must be rejected. More!