

## The Sin Substitute

Lev 16:20-22 - *“When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. <sup>21</sup> He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. <sup>22</sup> The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.*

2 Cor 5:21 - *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Friends, on Sunday past I spoke to you about the importance of framing the death of Jesus in the context of the Covenant.

So tonight – on Good Friday – when we focus our attention on the events which led Jesus to his crucifixion, and the suffering he endured on the cross, my goal is to keep all this in the Covenant Framework so that we come away with an increased faith and trust in Jesus... in addition to a sober appreciation of what exactly was involved in securing an unbreakable new covenant for us.

Because while we do not want to place our faith in our own sentiment and emotional response- the gratitude, the thankfulness, the love we feel in response to seeing what our Savior endured to achieve what is needed for us.... infuses our faith in Christ with passion!

Indeed friends our Lord was passionate – since the measure of passion is what you are willing to suffer for that which you love.

And our Lord was willing to suffer the shame and degradation of becoming sin in order to create that New Covenant for us.

So what does Paul mean when he says “Christ became Sin...”

Well under the old Covenant, once a year the people’s Sin – all the wickedness and rebellion of the nation of Israel – was confessed and laid upon a goat and this goat was released into the wilderness - effectively symbolizing that once the sacrifice for sins had been made God would remove their sin and get rid of it – it was taken away... gone

This was a ctr/alt/del relationship reboot – any violations of the covenant we now considered off the official record.

It would be like having all the speeding tickets, all the driving offences and fender benders expunged from your driving record – gone...

Or better yet – think of all those things which we've done which have hurt those who are close to us, things we regret or are ashamed of...

Those who love us forgive us those offences - but those wrongs still kinda remain between us, right? They are the scars of the past, the painful memories we avoid, the elephants in the room we don't talk about.

We may be forgiven and things have moved on... but as they say we can't undo what's been done.

But when Christ becomes sin for us – when God lays upon him all the violations of the old covenant and all the upcoming

violations of the new covenant... what's been done, or will be done is actually undone!

Jesus became sin, so he could take our sin **away**, remove it, not just forgive it - it's gone!

This is why King David wrote in Ps 103:12 *“as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*

And the prophet Jeremiah spoke of a time that would come where God would *“Forgive their wickedness and will **remember their sins no more.**”* (Jer 31:34)

So friends for this to occur it wasn't enough that Jesus died – sure that would have sealed the covenant and paid for the offences... but in order for our Sins to be gone, removed completely – Jesus had to become Sin, and thus it was necessary for him to die **on a cross.**

Now it's been 2000 years since then and the cross has taken on a life of its own since then, we Christians venerate it, it's an important symbol for us, we wear it on Jewelry, stick it on top of our buildings... there's no symbol that represents the essence of our faith better, right?

But friends, we've forgotten that in Jesus' day death by crucifixion was a criminal's death - it was not a noble death. It wasn't like dying in the line of duty as a soldier – defending your country and your home; it wasn't like taking a bullet for your partner...

The Cross actually represents shame and disgrace friends... it's not noble, it's not honorable, it was not considered sacrificial – it was how the lowest of the low deserved to die for their dastardly deeds

You see friends, if Jesus was to become Sin in our day and age – he would be accused of something absolutely despicable - like making child pornography, found guilty as a child molester

and sentenced to life in prison, and it would be seen as no big loss if the other inmates killed him.

We would not have a cross as the symbol of a criminal's death – as the symbol of our Lord becoming Sin – we would have an orange prison suit instead... or perhaps an electric chair or a hypodermic needle for death by lethal injection... for this is how criminals die today.

You see friends, if the gospels emphasize anything about what our Lord suffered in being crucified it is the appalling injustice and the scandal he experienced in being made sin when He himself was without it...

The horror of crucifixion is not the physical agony, it's the shame and disgrace of being tried and condemned as criminal, treated as any two-bit revolutionary - when you are in fact the Messiah, the perfect Covenant Partner, and innocent of any wrong doing.

It's the anguish of carrying that all the sin of the old covenant, all the future violations of the new covenant away from the presence of God... to be forgotten like the scapegoat in the wilderness... *"My God, My God why have you forsaken me!!!"*  
(Mat 27:46)

"He became sin who had no sin – so that we could become the righteousness of God."

He switched our places friends – he was convicted of our wrong doing, he is sent away, he is scorned and treated with contempt, sent out of the presence of God - and instead... WE are considered to be the perfect Covenant Partners, innocent of any wrong doing, the ones who will save the world...

Why? Because God wanted to do this, and Jesus our Lord and Savior agreed!

No wonder the cross is so significant for us; it was the instrument through which Jesus became Sin for us.

So tonight friends as touch, and taste and immerse ourselves in the elements in remembrance of the crucifixion of our Lord – allow that to strip away any pride or honor or glory you might have attributed to the cross

Pray that the Holy Spirit will impress upon us the shame and the scorn and the derision of a criminal's death that our Lord willingly took upon himself – for our sake

And help us to own up to the sin which was laid upon him, so that truly our sin can be taken away and removed from us

Friends – let us remember and confess...