

His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed *in* Types



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 4:1-8, 22:1-19, Num. 21:4-9.*

Memory Text: “And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together” (*Genesis 22:8*).

Most Christians understand a crucial truth: Salvation has always been accomplished only one way—through the sacrificial death of Jesus. Anyone in heaven will be there only through Jesus, whether or not they ever knew Him by name. Some will know much about the plan of salvation, others little; some will live here amid an outburst of light, others only in the shadows.

And yet life in the shadows isn't all darkness. For there to be shadows, there needs to be light. Shadows, in their own way, are an outline of light; they exist on the edge of light; and they couldn't be formed if there were no light. Shadows help us understand the light.

This week we look at those who were living in the shadows, shadows that were created only because the light was always there to begin with. Long before the full revelation granted at Calvary, the Lord was teaching His people truths about what God would do to save the world from sin, and He taught them with the shadows.

The Week at a Glance: What words does the Bible use to define sin? How was the Cross revealed in the story of Cain and Abel, in Abraham at Moriah, and in the fiery serpents in the wilderness? What do these accounts teach us about the gospel?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 8.*

The Sin Crisis

The Bible uses a number of different words to convey the idea of sin. Below are the most common ones used in both Testaments, including an explanation of their meaning and a few verses where the words are used. Look up the verses, applying the explanation as you read:

Old Testament

1. *Hattat*, “to miss the mark,” “to miss a target” (*Lev. 5:5, Ps. 51:4*).
2. *Awon*, translated “iniquity,” with the basic idea of crookedness, falsehood, a twisting (*Gen. 15:16, Isa. 43:24*).
3. *Pesha* means a deliberate, willful violation of a norm or authority. It’s rebellion against God and is sometimes translated as “transgression” (*Isa. 1:2, Amos 4:4*).
4. *Resha* means literally “out of joint,” to “be loose,” and commonly conveys the idea of wickedness (*Gen. 18:23, Exod. 23:1*).

New Testament

1. *Hamartia* means literally to “miss the mark” and is used in the New Testament to denote a human decision that is hostile to God (*John 19:11, 1 John 1:8*).
2. *Parokoe* means literally a “failure to hear” or an “unwillingness to hear.” Often translated as “disobedience” (*Rom. 5:19, Heb. 2:2*).
3. *Paraptoma* usually means a slip, a fault, a falling down. Commonly translated as “trespass,” or “transgression” (*Matt. 6:14, Rom. 4:25*).
4. *Anomia* suggests contempt or violation of the *nomos*, the law, and is the word from which “transgression of the law” is translated in 1 John 3:4 (*Matt. 7:23, Heb. 1:9*).
5. *Adikia* conveys the idea of “unrighteousness” (*Rom. 1:18, 2 Pet. 2:15*).

“To miss the mark,” a “twisting,” “a failure to hear,” “rebellion” . . . so many different words and concepts express the idea of sin. What this seems to say, among other things, is that sin can be manifested in various ways, spurred on and incited for different reasons. Write a short paragraph expressing what other lessons you’ve learned about sin from this word study.

The Sin Crisis *(cont.)*

“And the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

How can we, as beings steeped in sin, fully understand the magnitude of sin? We really can't. It's like trying to look at a blackboard in a dark room. And though we can't fully understand sin, we can still understand enough to know its malignity.

Think of three people to whom you are close: family, friends, neighbors, whomever. Look at their lives and write down the suffering that sin (and not necessarily their own) has brought upon them.

What did you write about? Sickness, disease, death, crime, violence, pain, alienation, hatred, bitterness, and on and on? Now multiply that by every human being who ever has lived or ever will live (except One), and we only begin to understand the ravages of sin.

And yet the outward physical destruction of sin is only part of the problem. Sin goes much deeper than what it does to us physically. Sin is, ultimately, a rebellion against the lordship and sovereignty of God. It is a refusal to accept His authority in one's life, conduct, and final destiny, and it is manifested in different moral, spiritual, and ethical behaviors that inevitably lead to suffering and death.

Sin, to be understood as sin, must be seen in the context of who we are in relationship to God. It must be seen as a state of existence as much as it is acts and deeds. Indeed, the acts and deeds themselves result from the state of sin in which we exist. Sin, therefore, is as much who we are as it is what we do, because, in the end, we do what we do because we are what we are.

Only as we appreciate what it takes to save us from sin can we begin to understand how pernicious it must be. What do the following texts tell us about how bad sin is, in that it took such extreme measures in order to save us from it? Luke 24:7, John 3:14, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:24.

Cain and Abel *(Gen. 4:1-8)*.

For the past two days we've looked at the sin problem. What about the cure?

For starters, after Adam and Eve transgressed and the Lord banished them from the Garden of Eden, they maintained their contact with Him through worship that centered on looking to the promised Son, who would bring an end to the sin problem. While Scripture doesn't elaborate on the system of sacrifices that Adam and Eve observed, it is evident from the worship activities of their first sons, Cain and Abel, that the sacrifice of the lamb, as an expression of repentance and faith in the coming Messiah, was central to their worship.

What attitudes did Cain cherish that made him refuse to offer the lamb sacrifice? *Gen. 4:1-8, 1 John 3:11-15.*

This story is often seen, and rightly so, as an early example of the contrast between those who accept Christ's righteousness by faith and those who seek to earn salvation by their "good works." Yet, there's an irony here. Those who oppose salvation by faith in Christ alone, without the works of the law (*Rom. 3:28, Gal. 2:16, 3:11*), often claim that such a teaching leads to sin. After all, they reason, if people are told that good works can't save, then why should people sweat through the self-denial needed to produce them (*Rom. 6:1, 15*)?

Read carefully Genesis 4:3-7 and 1 John 3:12. In both texts, what is being said about Cain's works in contrast to Abel's? What were Cain's works, at least as shown in the Bible, and why were they depicted as they were? What do these texts tell us about the nature of trying to earn salvation?

Cain's works were deemed evil, because they were wrought from an attempt to earn salvation, whereas Abel's works, stemming from a heart that understood the need for a sacrifice for sin, were deemed righteous. In other words, only those who understand their total dependence upon God for salvation, their total dependence upon a Substitute, can produce what would be deemed "good works." The value of works must be seen, perhaps, in the motives that lead to them: Works done from a heart seeking to earn salvation are deemed evil, while works done from a heart expressing thanks for the salvation already rendered are deemed righteous. Why do you think that is so?

Abraham and Calvary *(Gen. 22:1-19, Gal. 3:8).*

One of the most moving and powerful stories in the Hebrew Bible is that of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. Three faiths, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, all for various reasons, cherish this story. Christians, of course, see in this story a type, a symbol, of the plan of salvation, of the substitutionary death of Jesus in our stead.

Read Genesis 22:1-19. **Aside from the gospel element, what other lessons could you draw from this story that could be of value in knowing the Lord? What lessons do you think other faiths can draw from this episode?**

Whatever powerful spiritual truths can be taught from this story, the gospel element, the lamb as sacrifice instead of the child, forms the core of the chapter. And one of the things that God was telling us here through the gospel is that even an act of total self-sacrifice—Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his own son (surely, What father wouldn’t have preferred offering himself instead of his child?)—wasn’t what was sufficient to atone for sin. The problem of sin was way too deep for anything any of us, as sinners, could do to solve it. Even an act such as what Abraham was willing to do to, out of a heart of faith and submission, wasn’t enough. Only the Lord Himself could take care of the problem of sin; only He could provide the needed Lamb.

Read Genesis 22:8. **How was the gospel revealed there? Do you think Abraham fully understood what he was saying? Or was he, perhaps, just trying to calm his son?**

Galatians 3:7-9 says that the gospel was preached to Abraham, and that in his seed (*quoting Gen. 22:18*) all the nations of the world would be blessed. Clearly, whatever Abraham had understood about the plan of salvation beforehand, he understood more now. No doubt, it was a painful lesson to learn.

Though Abraham’s works couldn’t save him, in what ways did his works express his faith? What lessons can we learn from this about the relationship between faith and works?

The Serpent in the Wilderness (*Num. 21:4-9*).

During Israel's long travels and sojourn in the wilderness, God in His mercy had miraculously protected them from fiery serpents and scorpions (*see Deut. 8:15*). He had preserved their health and strength, given them water and nutritious food in abundance, as well as guidance on their journey and protection from hostile tribes. Still, the people as a whole found constant cause for dissatisfaction and complaint, especially against Moses. While their feet were moving circuitously toward the Promised Land, their hearts were steadily moving toward perdition.

Some of Israel's complaints against Moses were, it would seem (at least on the surface), legitimate, were they not (*see Num. 21:5*)? After all, food and water are pretty basic necessities. Why, then, the fiery serpents?

An interesting twist to this story is the fact that the people were to look at a copy of a fiery serpent in order to live. Why, of all things, a serpent, often in the Bible, as well as in much ancient literature, a symbol for evil (*Gen. 3:1, Rev. 20:2*)? In contrast, Ellen White says that the serpent "was a symbol of Christ; and the necessity of faith in His merits was thus presented to their minds."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 430. Indeed, Christ's own words in John 3:14, 15 give the same idea. Why, then, would a symbol of evil be used to represent something so good?

Some have speculated that the answer is found in the nature of Christ's death itself. At the Cross He was our Sin-Bearer; He was the One who bore the sin and evil of the world, who even became sin, and a curse, for us (*2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13*). And it's from this, His death in our stead, that we can look and find salvation from the evil that otherwise would destroy us. This is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith: Jesus, all goodness, became on the cross the focus of all evil. Hence, the symbol of the serpent as a symbol for Christ, the One who bore all the world's evil.

Put yourself in the position of an Israelite who just got bitten by a deadly snake, which has already killed others around you. You're told that the only way to live is to look at a copy of the snake. Why is this such a good example of what it means to live by faith, to trust in what you don't fully understand, and to accept your own utter inability to save yourself?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 422–432.

“Nothing but the righteousness of Christ can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. . . . We must not think that our own merits will save us; Christ is our only hope of salvation. ‘For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Acts 4:12.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.

“Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned.”—Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 25.

“The same lesson that Christ bade Moses to give to the children of Israel in the wilderness is for all such souls suffering under the plague spot of sin. From the billowy cloud Christ spoke to Moses and told him to make a brazen serpent and place it upon a pole, and then bid all that were bitten with the fiery serpents to look and live. What if, in the place of looking as Christ commanded them, they had said, ‘I do not believe it will do me the least bit of good to look. I am too great a sufferer from the sting of the poisonous serpent.’ Obedience was the object to be gained, implicit and blind obedience, without stopping to inquire the reason or the science of the matter. Christ’s word was, ‘Look and live.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 20.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How do we understand the difference between the results of sin and sin itself? Is that even a fair distinction?
- 2 How do these Bible accounts help us understand that salvation has always been by faith alone, as opposed to by the works of the law? Why can salvation never be by anything other than what Christ has done for us?
- 3 Look at the final two sentences in the last Ellen White quote above. What is she saying there? Why is this concept so important, especially today, when the claims of science have such a powerful sway over human thinking?

Never Too Late

by J. H. Zachary

During a camp meeting held in Oregon, U.S.A., 75-year-old Wilbur Jones and his wife attended a seminar to learn how to use new DVD materials in evangelism. *I wonder if an old lay person can actually preach a sermon*, Wilbur thought. Wilbur and Arleta purchased the equipment and presentations.

He received permission to present the illustrated Bible studies in a nearby prison. "This is easier than I thought," Wilbur told his wife. His heart was touched as he watched the inmates listen to the Bible messages. It was a wonderful day for the couple when two of the inmates were baptized.

Wilbur and his wife were surprised to be invited to hold meetings in East Africa. At first he wanted to say No. "I am not a preacher," he said. But the couple asked to know God's will and talked with others who had gone before. The couple agreed to go.

Wilbur and Arleta were assigned to a team serving one town in Kenya. Wilbur almost backed down when he learned that 5,000 people would attend the nightly meetings and more than 10,000 on Sabbath.

The meetings were held on a hill overlooking the town. Wilbur watched the crowd gather late that first afternoon. The translator urged Wilbur to make an appeal to decide for Jesus each evening. Wilbur preached the same Bible message he had shared in the prison back home. By the end of the first week, 300 persons had responded to calls for baptism. "I had never preached a sermon before, let alone before 10,000 people," Wilbur marveled.

Team members conducted a program for children in the Adventist church. Leaders had brought 3,000 stickers to give to the children, enough, they thought, to last for two weeks. But almost 3,000 children had come to their program, and after the first night they had only a dozen stickers left. On Sabbath the number of children almost doubled.

Wilbur trembled when he was told that a charismatic pastor wanted to talk with him. But buoyed by prayer, he went. The young pastor told him, "As I have attended your meetings I am impressed that what you preach is based on the Bible. I have been teaching my people errors. I want to become a Seventh-day Adventist. Please pray that I will be able to share this precious message with my 14 congregations."

"I wish I had started preaching earlier in my life," Wilbur testifies. "I have seen the Holy Spirit work through me in ways I never dreamed possible."

J. H. ZACHARY is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.