LESSON 9 *February 19–25

(page 68 of Standard Edition)

Jesus, *the* Perfect Sacrifice

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Heb. 9:15, Gen. 15:6–21, Jer. 34:8–22, Eph. 3:14–19, Heb. 7:27, Heb. 10:10, Heb. 9:22–28.*

Memory Text: **"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"** *(Hebrews 10:14, NKJV).*

The idea that a man found guilty and executed on a cross should be worshiped as God was offensive to the ancient mind. Sparse reference to the cross in Roman literature shows their aversion to the idea. For the Jews, the law declared that a man impaled on a tree was cursed by God *(Deut. 21:23)*.

Thus, the first motifs that we find in the Christian paintings of the catacombs were the peacock (supposedly symbolizing immortality), a dove, the athlete's victory palm, and the fish. Later, other themes appeared: Noah's ark; Abraham sacrificing the ram instead of Isaac; Daniel in the lions' den; Jonah being spit out by the fish; a shepherd carrying a lamb; or depictions of such miracles as the healing of the paralytic and the raising of Lazarus. These were symbols of salvation, victory, and care. The cross, on the other hand, conveyed a sense of defeat and shame. Yet, it was the cross that became the emblem of Christianity. In fact, Paul simply called the gospel "the word of the cross" *(1 Cor. 1:18, ESV)*.

This week we will look at the cross as it appears in the book of Hebrews.

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 26.*

Why Were Sacrifices Needed?

Hebrews 9:15 explains that the death of Jesus as a sacrifice had the purpose of providing "redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant," in order that the people of God might "receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" *(NASB)*.

In the ancient Near East, a covenant between two persons or nations was a serious matter. It involved an exchange of promises under oath. It implied the assumption that the gods would punish those who broke the oath. Often, these covenants were ratified through the sacrifice of an animal.

For example, when God made a covenant with Abraham, the ceremony involved cutting animals in half *(Gen. 15:6–21)*. The parties would walk between the parts as an acknowledgment that those animals represented the fate of the party who broke the covenant. Significantly, only God walked between the animals, for the purpose of communicating to Abraham that He would not break His promise.

Compare Genesis 15:6–21 and Jeremiah 34:8–22. What do these texts teach about the covenant?

_____

_____

The covenant with God gave Israel access to the Promised Land as their inheritance. It involved, however, a set of commandments and the sprinkling of blood upon an altar. This sprinkling implied the destiny of the party who broke the covenant. This is why Hebrews says that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]" *(Heb. 9:22, literal translation)*.

When Israel broke the covenant, God faced a painful dilemma. The covenant demanded the death of the transgressors, but God loved His people. If God should simply look the other way or refuse to punish the transgressors, His commandments would never be enforceable, and this world would descend into chaos.

The Son of God, however, offered Himself as a Substitute. He died in our place so that we "may receive the promised eternal inheritance" *(Heb. 9:15, 26, ESV; Rom. 3:21–26)*. That is, He was going to uphold the sanctity of His law while at the same time saving those who broke that law. And He could do this only through the Cross.

How can we see here why the law is so central to the gospel message?

_____

Diverse Kinds of Sacrifices

Jesus' death provided forgiveness, or remission, for our sins. The remission of our sins, however, involves much more than the cancellation of the penalty for our transgression of the covenant. It involves other elements just as important. That is why the Israelite sacrificial system had five different kinds of sacrifices. Each was necessary to express the richness of the meaning of the cross of Christ.

Read **Ephesians 3:14–19. What was the prayer request of Paul in behalf of believers?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

The *holocaust offering* (or burnt offering) required that the whole animal be consumed on the altar *(Leviticus 1)*. It represented Jesus, whose life was consumed for us. Expiation required Jesus' total commitment to us. Even though He was equal with God, Jesus "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" *(Phil. 2:5–8, ESV)*.

The *grain offering* was a gift of gratitude for God's provision of sustenance for His people *(Leviticus 2)*. It also represents Jesus, " 'the bread of life' " *(John 6:35, 48)*, through whom we have eternal life.

The *peace* or *fellowship offering* implied a communal meal with friends and family to celebrate the well-being provided by God *(Leviticus 3)*. It represented Christ, whose sacrifice provided peace for us *(Isa. 53:5, Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:14)*. It also emphasizes that we need to participate in Jesus' sacrifice by eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood *(John 6:51–56)*.

The *sin* or *purification offering* provided expiation for sins *(Lev. 4:1–5:13)*. This sacrifice emphasized the role of the blood of the animal—which represented its life—to provide redemption from sins *(Lev. 17:11)* and pointed forward to the blood of Jesus who redeems us from our sins *(Matt. 26:28, Rom. 3:25, Heb. 9:14)*.

The *guilt* or *reparation offering (Lev. 5:14–6:7)* provided forgiveness in cases where reparation or restitution was possible. It tells us that God's forgiveness does not free us from the responsibility to provide reparation or restitution, where possible, to those whom we have wronged.

The sanctuary sacrifices teach us that the experience of salvation is more than just accepting Jesus as our Substitute. We also need to "feed" on Him, share His benefits with others, and provide reparation to those whom we have wronged.

Jesus' Perfect Sacrifice

Read Hebrews 7:27 and Hebrews 10:10. How is Jesus' sacrifice described in these passages?

_____

_____

The Levitical priests—who were "many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office" *(Heb. 7:23, ESV)*—are contrasted with Jesus, who lives forever and has an eternal priesthood *(Heb. 7:24, 25)*. Levitical priests "daily" *(Heb. 7:27)* and "every year" *(Heb. 9:25)* offered gifts and sacrifices "that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper" *(Heb. 9:9, ESV; Heb. 10:1–4)*.

Jesus, however, offered Himself "once for all" a "single sacrifice" *(Heb. 10:10, 12–14, ESV)* that cleanses our consciences *(Heb. 9:14, Heb. 10:1–10)* and puts away sin *(Heb. 9:26)*. Jesus' sacrifice is superior to the sacrifice of animals because Jesus was the Son of God *(Heb. 7:26–28)*, who perfectly fulfilled God's will *(Heb. 10:5–10)*.

The description of the sacrifice of Jesus as having occurred "once for all" has several important implications.

First, Jesus' sacrifice is perfectly effective and never to be surpassed. The sacrifices of the Levitical priests were repeated because they were not effective; otherwise "would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?" *(Heb. 10:2, ESV)*.

Second, all the different kinds of sacrifices of the Old Testament found their fulfillment at the cross. Thus, Jesus not only cleanses us from sin *(Heb. 9:14)*, but He also provides sanctification *(Heb. 10:10–14)* by putting sin away from our lives *(Heb. 9:26)*. Before the priests could approach God in the sanctuary and minister in behalf of their fellow human beings, they had to be cleansed and sanctified, or consecrated *(Leviticus 8, Leviticus 9)*. Jesus' sacrifice cleanses us and consecrates us *(Heb. 10:10–14)* so that we may approach God with confidence *(Heb. 10:19–23)* and serve Him as "a royal priesthood" *(Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 2:9)*.

Finally, Jesus' sacrifice also provides nourishment for our spiritual life. It provides an example that we need to observe and follow. Thus, Hebrews invites us to fix our eyes upon Jesus, especially the events of the cross, and follow His lead *(Heb. 12:1–4; Heb. 13:12, 13)*.

The Cross is the basis for all the benefits that God bestows upon us. It provides purification from sin, sanctification to serve, and nourishment to grow. How can we better experience what we have been given in Jesus?

The Cross and the Cost of Forgiveness

Read Hebrews 9:22–28. What does this passage say about the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary?

_____

_____

The idea that the heavenly sanctuary needs cleansing makes sense in the context of the Old Testament sanctuary. The sanctuary is a symbol of God's government *(1 Sam. 4:4, 2 Sam. 6:2)*, and the way God deals with the sin of His people affects the public perception of the righteousness of His government *(Ps. 97:2)*. As ruler, God is the Judge of His people, and He is expected to be fair, vindicating the innocent and condemning the guilty. Thus, when God forgives the sinner, He carries judicial responsibility. The sanctuary, which represents God's character and administration, is contaminated. This explains why God bears our sins when He forgives (*Exod. 34:7, Num. 14:17–19*, the original Hebrew for "forgiving" [*nōśē'*] in these verses means "carrying, bearing").

The system of sacrifices in the Israelite sanctuary illustrated this point. When a person sought forgiveness, he brought an animal as a sacrifice in his behalf, confessed his sins over it, and slaughtered it. The blood of the animal was daubed upon the horns of the altar or sprinkled before the veil in the temple in the first apartment. Thus, the sin was symbolically transferred into the sanctuary. God took the sins of the people and bore them Himself.

In the Israelite system, cleansing from, or atonement for, sins occurred in two phases. During the year, repentant sinners brought sacrifices to the sanctuary, which cleansed them from their sin but transferred the sin to the sanctuary, to God Himself. At the end of the year, on the Day of Atonement, which was the day of judgment, God would cleanse the sanctuary, clearing His judicial responsibility by transferring the sins from the sanctuary to the scapegoat, Azazel, who represented Satan *(Lev. 16:15–22)*.

This two-phase system, represented by the two apartments in the earthly sanctuary, which were a pattern of the heavenly sanctuary *(Exod. 25:9, Heb. 8:5)*, permitted God to show mercy and justice at the same time. Those who confessed their sins during the year showed loyalty to God by observing a solemn rest and afflicting themselves on the Day of Atonement *(Lev. 16:29–31)*. Those who did not show loyalty would be "cut off" *(Lev. 23:27–32)*.

Think of what you would face if you had to face the just punishment for your sins. How should that truth help you understand what Christ has done for you?

Judgment and the Character of God

Read Romans 3:21–26; Romans 1:16, 17; and Romans 5:8. What does Redemption in the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins reveal about God?

_____

_____

The forgiveness of our sins implies two phases in Jesus' mediation in the two apartments of the heavenly sanctuary. First, Jesus removed our sins and carried them Himself on the cross in order to provide forgiveness to everyone who believes in Him *(Acts 2:38, Acts 5:31)*. On the cross, Jesus won the right to forgive anyone who believes in Him because He has carried their sin. He also has inaugurated a new covenant, which allows Him to put God's law in the heart of believers through the Holy Spirit *(Heb. 8:10–12, Ezek. 36:25–27)*.

A second phase in the ministry of Jesus consists of a judgment, the pre-Advent judgment, which was still future from the point of view of Hebrews *(Heb. 2:1–4; Heb. 6:2; Heb. 9:27, 28; Heb. 10:25)*. This judgment begins with God's people and is described in Daniel 7:9–27, Matthew 22:1–14, and Revelation 14:7. Its purpose is to show the righteousness of God in forgiving His people. In this judgment, the records of their lives will be open for the universe to see. God will show what happened in the hearts of believers and how they embraced Jesus as their Savior and accepted His Spirit in their lives.

Speaking of this judgment, Ellen G. White wrote: "Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. . . . But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 471, 472.

Why do the cross and the ministry of Jesus in our behalf suggest that we should look confidently, but with humility and repentance, toward the judgment?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, "Calvary," pp. 741–757; " 'It Is Finished,' " pp. 758–764, in *The Desire of Ages*.

Professor Jiří Moskala has explained the nature of this pre-Advent judgment. God "is not there in order to display my sins like in a shop window. He will, on the contrary, point first of all to His amazing transforming powerful grace, and in front of the whole universe He, as the true Witness of my entire life, will explain my attitude toward God, my inner motives, my thinking, my deeds, my orientation and direction of life. He will demonstrate it all. Jesus will testify that I made many mistakes, that I transgressed His holy law, but also that I repented, asked for forgiveness, and was changed by His grace. He will proclaim: 'My blood is sufficient for the sinner Moskala, his orientation of life is on Me, his attitude toward Me and other people is warm and unselfish, he is trustworthy, he is My good and faithful servant.' "—"Toward a Biblical Theology of God's Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15 (Spring 2004): p. 155.

"Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which 'seeketh not her own' has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 20.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Human beings have always had the tendency to offer different kinds of sacrifices to God as an exchange for forgiveness or salvation. Some offer God heroic acts of penance (long journeys, etc.), others offer a life of service, or acts of self-deprivation, et cetera. How should these acts be considered in the light of Jesus' sacrifice and the assertion of Scripture that the cross has put an end to all the sacrifices *(Dan. 9:27, Heb. 10:18)***?**

❷ At the same time, what is the role of sacrifice in the life of the believer? What did Jesus mean when He said that we need to take our cross and follow Him *(Matt. 16:24)***, or the apostle Paul when he said that we should offer our bodies as "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God"** *(Rom. 12:1, ESV)***? What is the relationship between the instructions of Jesus** *(Matt. 16:24)* **and Paul** *(Rom. 12:1)* **and Hebrews 13:15, 16?**

INSIDE *Story*

Gospel Calling

By Andrew McChesney

Khamla, the breadwinner of his family, fell ill in rural Laos. His legs became so heavy that he could not walk. He was confined to his house for three months.

With no money to see a doctor, Khamla (not his real name) resorted to all sorts of herbal medicine and traditional healers, including the shaman, or spirit doctor, in his village. Nothing helped.

Finally, seeing his desperation, someone told him about a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who had helped many people by cell phone. The man called up Pastor Sadua Lee (pictured) and asked for help.

Now, it wasn't simply a phone call. Phone calls were something of a luxury, costing 700 Laotian kips (8 US cents) per minute. At the time, a third of the population was living on less than US$1.25 a day, and nearly two-thirds were living on less than $2 a day.

The ill man begged Pastor Sadua to heal him.

"I am nobody," the pastor replied. "I cannot heal you. But my God, who is called Jesus, can heal you if it is His will. All we have to do is ask Him."

Khamla requested prayer, and the pastor prayed for him over the phone.

The next day, the pastor called the man to offer prayer for him again. Khamla was so excited. "I can walk!" he exclaimed.

Although his legs were weak, he was able to walk for the first time in three months. He had already gone out to work on his farm.

"Your God is so powerful," he said. "How can I worship your God, who is called Jesus?"

The pastor told him that he could, and should, worship Jesus all the time and added that Jesus had set aside a special day for worship, the seventh-day Sabbath. The man agreed to stop work on Sabbath to worship Jesus. Seeing that he lived far from a church, he asked the pastor to help him worship on Sabbaths. That meant that the pastor would have to call every Sabbath—but he didn't mind. If Jesus could provide Khamla with healing, He also would provide the means to pay for the calls.

Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel to people in Laos and other countries of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, which will receive this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

This mission story illustrates Mission Objective Number 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: "To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach . . . among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions." Learn more at IWillGo2020.org.

Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

Part I: Overview

Key Texts: *Heb. 9:15; Gen. 15:6–21; Jer. 34:8–22; Eph. 3:14–19; Heb. 7:27; Heb. 10:10; Heb. 9:22–28.*

Lesson Themes: Hebrews makes clear that the substitutionary death of Jesus is necessary to save us, because "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" *(Heb. 9:22, NRSV)*. Blood stands for the life of the substitute. The demand that the transgressor die was fulfilled by Jesus, who died once for all as an infinite sacrifice for all humanity.

The Old Testament delineates more than one kind of offering. Leviticus enumerates burnt offerings for atonement, grain offerings in gratitude for God's provision, fellowship offerings for communal meals with family and friends, sin offerings for the redemption of sin in cases of accidental sins, and reparation offerings for cases of restitution *(see Leviticus 1–6)*. But, as Paul points out, these sacrifices, including those offered on the Day of Atonement, were ultimately ineffective because they could never take away sins *(Heb. 10:1–4)*. Only the "precious blood of Christ," to which all these sacrifices pointed, could do that (*Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:19)*.

Part II: Commentary

As we saw last week, Hebrews 7 talks about Melchizedek who was superior to the Aaronic line of priests. Consequently, Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood because He is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 8 talks about the superiority of the second covenant, whose efficacy is further discussed in Hebrews 9:15. The first covenant, established with the Levites, was defective and could not remove sins *(Heb. 7:11; Heb. 9:9)*.

In Hebrews 9, Paul also speaks of Christ's superior sacrifice. Why is it superior? First, His offering is not applied in the earthly sanctuary but in the heavenly one *(Heb. 9:23, 24)*. Second, the blood that He offers is not from an animal but is His own blood *(Heb. 9:25, 26)*. Finally, the sacrifice of Christ is uniquely singular (*Heb. 9:12, 28, NRSV*, "once for all") and effective (*Heb. 9:14, NRSV*, "purify our conscience"; *Heb. 10:14, NRSV*, "perfected for all time") in contrast to the animal sacrifices *(Heb. 10:1, 4)*.

The Dilemma of the Altar of Incense in the Most Holy: Hebrews 9 poses what appears to be a discrepancy. In verses 3 and 4 it says: "Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of Holies. In it stood the

golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold" *(NRSV)*. This text seems at odds with Exodus 30:6, "You shall place it [the altar of incense] in front of the curtain" *(NRSV)*, which indicates that the altar of incense was not in the Most Holy apartment, but in the Holy Place, together with the lampstand and the table with the consecrated bread. At this altar of incense, Aaron was supposed to burn incense "every morning" *(Exod. 30:7, NRSV)*. Similarly, other passages in the Pentateuch place the altar of incense in the Holy Place, not in the Most Holy Place *(Exod. 40:5, 26)*. So, why does Paul place the golden altar of incense in the Most Holy Place?

How do we account for this apparent anomaly?

Paul might have been thinking along these lines: "Although positioned in the main hall (i.e., the holy place), the altar of incense (compare Exod. 30:1–10; 1 Chron. 28:18) 'belonged to the debir' (the Most Holy Place). It appears that the ritual burning of incense performed upon this altar had a direct effect on the Most Holy Place where God manifested His presence between the cherubim. After all, the smoke of incense most likely suffused the inner room. This may explain why Hebrews places the altar of incense in the Most Holy Place (Heb. 9:4)."—*The SDA International Bible Commentary*, entry on Hebrews 9:4.

Also it is important to note that in the Greek the author of Hebrews does not actually state that the altar of incense *stood* in the second apartment; only that the Most Holy "had" the altar. The word translated "had" *(NKJV)* may be rendered "contained," but this is not its only or necessary meaning.

"The connection between the altar and the most holy place here indicated may be that its function was closely connected with the most holy place. The incense offered daily on this altar was directed to the mercy seat in the most holy. There God manifested His presence between the cherubim, and as the incense ascended with the prayers of the worshipers, it filled the most holy place as well as the holy. The veil that separated the two apartments did not extend to the ceiling but reached only partway. Thus incense could be offered in the holy place—the only place where ordinary priests might enter—and yet reach the second apartment, the place to which it was directed."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 449.

Also the word used by Paul for the "altar" (thymiatērion) came to be used in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament to refer to the censer by itself *(2 Chron. 26:19; Ezek. 8:11)*. The high priest carried this censer with him into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement *(Lev. 16:12)*.

In any case, Paul's focus does not seem to be so much on the rooms and furniture, since verse 5 says: "Of these things we cannot speak now in detail." This verse implies that more important than the furniture and its placement is the point that Paul is making by referring to them,

namely, the superiority of Christ's sacrifice.

"The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God. Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be approached—symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 353.

Substitutionary Death of Christ: Substitution and satisfaction are terms that have aroused a lot of criticism. Why would God need some kind of substitution for the penalty of humanity's sins? What does substitution mean? Substitution in this context means that someone takes the place of someone else in order to bear that person's punishment for the purpose of saving him or her.

As to the second term, satisfaction, we must ask, What needed to be satisfied? Does the Bible support the concept of substitutionary death with the idea of the Substitution satisfying the claims of the law? Substitution occurs in the case of Abraham. When he was on Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac, "Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering *instead* of his son" *(Gen. 22:13, NRSV; emphasis added)*. In the Passover narrative, life was spared by substitution. But the only firstborn males spared were those whose families sacrificed a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts *(Exod. 12:7, 13)*. *The whole sacrificial system was based on substitution.* Because the penalty for sin is death, the substitute animal was killed, thereby sparing the sinner's life *(Lev. 17:11)*.

Turning to the New Testament, we find that John the Baptist identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God who *takes away* the sin of the world!" *(John 1:29, NRSV; emphasis added)*. Paul declared: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" *(1 Cor. 5:7, ESV)*. In the letter to the Ephesians, this same Paul is unambiguous: "Christ loved us and *gave himself up for us*, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" *(Eph. 5:2, NRSV; emphasis added)*. In Romans, Paul states: "while we still were sinners *Christ died for us*" *(Rom. 5:8, NRSV; emphasis added)*. The Bible is full of substitution and sin-bearing language. *(For more examples, see Isa. 53:12; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24.)* Hebrews crowns this topic with the indisputable, though often ignored, statement that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" *(Heb. 9:22, NRSV)*. What blood? It cannot be the blood of animals, because "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take

away sins" *(Heb. 10:4, NRSV)*. Thus, it has to be the blood, the life, of Christ.

Jesus bore our sins and died for us. Thus, we must not view Christ as a mere third party, an individual separated from God and humanity. Such a view would brutally distort the understanding of atonement. Christ would be portrayed then as Someone simply pacifying the Father. God, in turn, would be shown as punishing the innocent Jesus, just so that we guilty people could survive. The broken unity between the Father and the Son comes to full view in Paul's great reconciliation statement in which the Father takes action through the Son: "All this [new creation in Christ] is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ" *(2 Cor. 5:18, NRSV)*.

Our Substitute was neither Christ alone, nor God alone, but God in Christ, who was both God and man. God in Christ substituted Himself for us. Thus, the objections to a substitutionary atonement disappear. There is nothing immoral (lawbreaking) here, because the Substitute for the law breakers is the Lawmaker, who only could make atonement for transgression. The Cross is no transactional bargain with the devil. But as God, Christ reconciled us to Himself to "satisfy the claims of the broken law, and thus He [Christ] bridges the gulf which sin has made."—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 341.

Part III: Life Application

1. In the context of Christ's substitution, consider the refrain of the hymn entitled "And Can It Be?" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 198): "Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" What does this sentiment mean to you personally?

2. Why is substitution so central to the whole plan of salvation? What does it tell us about how bad sin is that it took the self-sacrifice of "God in Christ" in order to solve the problem and offer us the hope of eternal life?

Notes