

## Class Two: Reconciliation Cross as Purification & Propitiation

1. What is our problem? Because of sin/impurity, our relationship with God is broken
2. What did Christ do on the cross? Christ reconciled us with God
3. How did that address our problem? We can draw near to God

### A: Sacrifice of Purification

- The, “purpose of sacrifice is not to ‘change God’s mind,’ but to purify a space in the human world so that God can be present there.”<sup>i</sup>
- Ancient Israelites would conduct purity rituals to enter the sanctuary out of respect for God’s profound holiness and purity<sup>ii</sup>
- Ritual impurity ≠ sin or badness<sup>iii</sup>
  - Childbirth and burying the dead are presented as important for the people of Israel in the Torah even though they make one impure
  - Impurity was a contrast of being in a human state versus God’s state. God doesn’t reproduce or die. Purification rituals became a spiritual discipline to remind them of God’s transcendence
- Jesus healed and touched many who were unclean, but he did not become unclean himself – his purity was transferred to them<sup>iv</sup>
- Similarly, in his death, Jesus tore the veil of the temple; his blood was the ultimate sacrifice for purity – it covered all humanity and cleared away all obstacles to connecting with God<sup>v</sup>
- If we are purified in Christ’s saving death, then God can come among us without our being destroyed<sup>vi</sup>
- St. Maximus the Confessor: (580-662), born in Constantinople, monk
  - Saw Jesus’ blood as access to God through Christ’s death; this access was accomplished in contrast to the limits of the old system where the blood was just poured out on the Temple altar, but in Christ, everyone is covered in the blood<sup>vii</sup>

“Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” (Matthew 27:50-51a)

## B: Sin Offering/Lamb of God

- Sacrifice in the Old Testament
  - Burnt offering, sin offering, and guilt offering dealt with the peoples’ sin<sup>viii</sup>
  - Peace offerings and drink offerings expressed thanksgiving<sup>ix</sup>
  - Forgiveness for sin came through repentance, prayer, and doing good deeds; all Israel forgiven on the Day of Atonement<sup>x</sup>



“Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)

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- Jesus as the Lamb of God<sup>xii</sup>
  - Tamid – daily burnt offering of 2 lambs to expiate sins (Ex 29:38-43)
  - Scapegoat – a goat on the Day of Atonement who the priest symbolically imbues with the peoples’ sin and sends out to the wilderness (Lev 16:6-10), but it is not a lamb and is not sacrificed
  - Guilt Offering – regular offering to remove guilt of sin, but included bulls and goats as well as lambs (Lev 14)
  - Binding of Isaac – Abraham put to the test and asked to offer up his son, Isaac. God stops Abraham’s hand and offers a ram (Gen 22)
  - Lamb Led to the Slaughter – Jesus as the suffering servant (Isa 53:7)
  - Paschal Lamb – Jesus as the ultimate Passover lamb, but that was a peace offering and not a sin or guilt offering (Ex 12)
  - Conquering Lamb – the slaughtered lamb is triumphant (Rev 5)

- Critique and Questions

- Both of these views see Jesus as a mediator between God's holiness and our sinfulness. What does God's holiness mean to you?
- In Hebrews 9, Jesus is depicted as the High Priest and the sacrificial lamb. What does it mean for God to be God and Priest and sacrifice?
- Karl Rahner, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit, suggested that the water and blood that came from Jesus' side washes us, cleanses us from sin like baptismal water.<sup>xiii</sup> Do you connect to washed in the blood theology?
- If Jesus' self-sacrifice paid it all, does that make us complacent? Does this theology teach us how to respond?

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<sup>i</sup> William C. Placher. *Jesus the Savior: The Meaning of Jesus Christ for Christian Faith* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Education Media Production Services Unit, 2009), 134.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid, 133-134.

<sup>iii</sup> E. P. Sanders. *Judaism: practice and belief, 63 BCE-66 CE*. (London: SCM, 1992), 214, 217-219.

<sup>iv</sup> Stephen Finalan. *Sacrifice and atonement: Psychological motives and Biblical patterns* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2016), 12.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Placher, 134-137

<sup>vii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood\\_of\\_Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_of_Christ)

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.jewfaq.org/qorbanot.htm>

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, "Paschal Lamb" Figure 398 in *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1909).

<sup>xii</sup> <https://bible.org/article/another-look-lamb-god>

<sup>xiii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamb\\_of\\_God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamb_of_God)