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PENAL SUBSTITUTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Theologically and biblically speaking, penal substitution refers to God's gift of His Son to undergo the penalty of death as a substitute for fallen humanity, recent efforts to deny that teaching notwithstanding. The OT offers many examples of cases in which divine judicial action resulted in the deaths of offenders who violated God's standards of righteousness. No clear evidence in the OT that each individual sin required its own sacrifice. In addition, the Levitical system of animal sacrifices required the death of an animal for sin. The Hebrew and the LXX supported by NT citations back up this concept of judicial punishment for sin. Twelve principles governed the offering of OT sacrifices that pertained to the corporate worship of Israel. Several OT texts illustrate penal substitutionary sacrifices in the OT. The first is the Passover of Exodus 12 in which God graciously spared guilty Israelites through the deaths of animals substituted for the firstborn in each household. Another OT text to illustrate penal substitution is Leviticus 16, the institution of the Day of Atonement. The scapegoat symbolized the removal of Israel's sin to allow people to enter the presence of a holy God. The Day of Atonement expiated the nation's sins, cleansed the sanctuary from sin's pollution, and removed sins from the community. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is a third text to illustrate penal substitution. The suffering servant of the LORD in this section clearly anticipates the Messiah's coming substitutionary death as penalty for His people's sins. The OT sacrificial system clearly laid the basis for penal substitution in awaiting Israel's coming Messiah.

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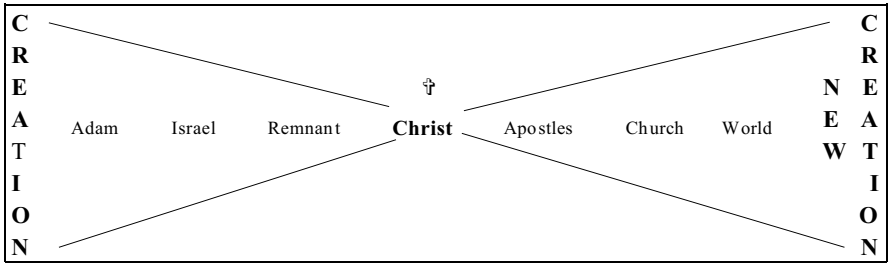
Crucicentrism characterizes evangelical theology.[1] Christ's atoning sacrifice

[1]Steve Chalke, "The Redemption of the Cross," in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement*, eds. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 36. However, Chalke believes that evangelical thinking about the cross has become distorted.

in His crucifixion forms the center, not only of theology, but of mankind's history. The following diagram visualizes that truth chiastically.[2]



The central importance of the sacrificial death of Christ makes any variation from biblical teaching on the topic a vital issue. In fact, denial of the penal substitution involved in Christ's sacrifice has implications for nearly every major doctrine historically identified with evangelicalism. However, the doctrine of penal substitution is disappearing from the modern church with some scholars arguing "that it is irrelevant, too violent, too individualistic, or insufficient."[3]

Definition

Penal substitution means that Christ gave Himself to suffer and die in place of the sinner in order to bear the full penalty for sin. As Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach define it, "The doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin."[4]

The Issue

Some theologians reject the doctrine of penal substitution.[5] At least a handful of biblical scholars have gone so far as to characterize penal substitution as some sort of cosmic child abuse, accusing adherents of producing a caricature of God

[2]Adapted from Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 195.

[3]Naomichi Masaki, "Contemporary Views on Atonement in Light of the Lutheran Confessions," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72/4 (October 2008):314.

[4]Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007) 103.

[5]See the list of sources critical of penal substitution in ibid., 22-25. It is not the purpose of this essay to explore or explain opposition to penal substitution—other essays in this series will deal with that matter.

that is demeaning and deplorable.[6] In addition, feminist theologians call for the liberation of Christian theology from penal substitution because of its "abusive theology that glorifies suffering" and "from the oppression of racism, classism, and sexism, that is, from patriarchy."[7] Such emotionally charged words depict penal substitution as a brutish doctrine inconsistent with Christian standards of love, mercy, and grace.[8]

OT Background

Consideration of the concept of penal substitution must begin with the first word, "penal." Without demonstrating the necessity of divine imposition of penalty or punishment for sin, penal substitution is impossible. A necessary question is whether or not the OT speaks of divine retribution for sin. In answer, a striking contrast develops early in the Scriptures between the way God blesses what He created (Gen 1:22, 28; 2:3; 5:2) and then how He curses it (3:14, 17; 4:11). Indeed, the biblical text asserts that death results from divine judicial action brought against mankind (2:17; 3:3, 19; 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31; 6:5-7). Pain, banishment, and death do not come about "mechanically or impersonally; rather, God acts to bring them about."[9] In response to those who might suggest a misunderstanding the OT record, one notes that Paul seems to have perceived the same truth, according to Rom 5:12 and 6:23.

Divine wrath or anger produces the divine curse or punishment/penalty for sin. Many examples occur in the OT: The judicial execution of Korah and his fellow rebels results from divine wrath (Num 16:46). In the wilderness the fallen corpses of

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[6]E.g., Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 192; Brian D. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves in Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003) 102-4; Colin Greene, "Is the Message of the Cross Good News for the Twentieth Century?" in *Atonement Today*, ed. by John Goldingay (London: SPCK, 1995) 232. Chalke responds to the outcry created by his accusing the penal substitution view of holding to some form of cosmic child abuse by writing, "Though the sheer bluntness of my imagery shocked some, I contend that, in truth, it represents nothing more than a stark unmasking of what I understand to be the violent, pre-Christian thinking behind the popular theory of penal substitutionary atonement. . . . I believe it to be biblically, culturally and pastorally deficient and even dangerous" (Chalke, "The Redemption of the Cross" 34-35).

[7]Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, eds. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim, 1989) 26-27.

[8]But, consider that a "deity strictly and simply just, but destitute of compassion for the guilty, would have inflicted the penalty of the violated law upon the actual transgressor. He would not have allowed of a substituted satisfaction of justice, and still less would he have provided one. It is important to notice this fact, because it shows the senselessness of a common objection to the doctrine of vicarious atonement, namely, that it is incompatible with mercy" (William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology: Classic Reprint Edition*, 3 vols. [1888; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971] 2:382).

[9]Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions* 118.

rebellious Israelites bear witness to divine wrath (Num 11:33-34; Deut 9:7). Divine judgment falls upon Sodom and Gomorrah due to a holy God's wrath (Deut 29:23). Mistreatment of orphans and widows induces the wrath of Almighty God, sometimes resulting in the deaths of the miscreants (Exod 22:21-24).

According to Lev 17:11 ("For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement"[10]), atonement in the OT requires blood.[11] But, does that atoning blood require the death of the sacrifice? Leon Morris points out that the text is "ambiguous, for the reference to blood could be understood as signifying the presentation of life."[12] So, does the requirement of blood demand the death of the sacrifice in order to offset a penalty of death for the transgressor?

Morris emphasizes that Num 35:33 ("blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it") requires the death of the murderer to make atonement (יְכֻפַּר, *yĕkupar*, "expiate").[13] This text involves no ambiguity. In this case, the death of the criminal provides the expiating blood. The fact that the text deals with a capital crime requiring the death penalty, rather than dealing with sacrifice per se, does not nullify its point concerning the nature of atonement (expiation). In matters of atonement by sacrifice as well as by capital punishment, "it is expiation of sin that is in question, in both cases the means is blood, in both cases the action is directed towards God, and in both cases atonement is said to be secured."[14]

The Septuagint (LXX) evidences a pre-Christian Jewish understanding of atonement (especially in the use of the Hebrew words for atonement, כִּפֶּר [*kippēr*] and כֹּפֶר [*kōper*]) as propitiation since it employs ἐξιλάσκομαι (*exilaskomai*) 83 times for translating *kippēr*.[15] Summing up a detailed analysis, Morris deduces that the basic meanings of *kippēr* and ἐξιλάσκομαι involve "the thought of the offering

[10]Unless otherwise noted, all English citations of Scripture are from the NASU.

[11]Blood did not play as significant a role in the rituals of contemporary ANE cultures as it did in Israel. John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) 131; Ronald Youngblood, *The Heart of the Old Testament: A Survey of Key Theological Themes*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 83.

[12]Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (1955; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 114.

[13]Ibid. "Expiate" means "atone for, redress."

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 142. ἐξιλάσκομαι appears 16 times in Leviticus and also occurs in Lev 17:11. Morris' thorough treatment of the concept of propitiation (ibid., 125-85) includes a detailed analysis of the use of the Greek words employed in the LXX. No examination of this topic should ignore his treatise.

of a ransom which turns away the divine wrath from the sinner."[16] In addition to ransom and divine wrath, *kippēr* "denotes a substitutionary process . . . so plain as to need no comment in the cases where life is substituted for life."[17] Since the OT reveals the reality of divine wrath, it cannot be ignored or explained away as impersonal wrath, mild displeasure, mere irritation, or capricious passion. In nearly 600 OT texts more than 20 different Hebrew words provide a rich wrath vocabulary.[18] Divine righteousness, holiness, and justice require divine retribution. Without divine retribution, divine mercy becomes nothing more than a vestigial appendage without function or purpose.

Galatians 3:10, citing the LXX of Deut 27:26, speaks of the curse falling upon those who trust their salvation to their good works, which they perform according to the Law of Moses. The curse is plainly punitive—a penalty for disobedience. Galatians 3:13 further explains that "Christ purchased us from the curse of the Law, becoming a curse for us." In other words, Christ is our substitute, bearing the results of the curse for mankind's disobedience to the Law. That comprises penal substitution, pure and simple.

Paul, in Gal 3:13, cites Deut 21:22-23, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance." Here Moses speaks of one possible means of implementing the judicial death penalty: impalement. Therefore, "accursed of God" (קִלְלַת אֱלֹהִים, *qillaṯ 'lōhîm*) expresses the punitive nature of impaling. Consequently, Paul picks up that same concept in Gal 3:13. What makes the passage in Deuteronomy so pertinent is that it describes punitive action. Indeed, reference to Christ "becoming a curse for us" (v. 10) depicts penal substitution. Since the Holy Spirit was superintending Paul's writing of Galatians and since Paul understood that the matter involves penal substitution, how can anyone deny this truth? In the preliminary drafts of his doctoral dissertation, Abner Chou writes,

> [T]here are implications from Baal Peor that the punishment may have a *representational nature* due to the targeting of the leadership in that situation. In any case, the major emphasis of both Baal Peor and Deuteronomy is that this absolutely supreme punishment is the only means by which God's wrath/curse can be satisfied and turned away. This is simply because it is the most severe of the already deadly punishments. The highest crime

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[16]Ibid., 153. Culver specifies the distinction between expiation and propitiation in this way: "sins (offenses, trespasses, etc.) are expiated. Wrath, or the person who is wrathful is propitiated. One does not expiate God; one expiates sin. Nor does one propitiate sin; one propitiates God or His wrath" (Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* [Geanies House, UK: Christian Focus, 2005] 554).

[17]Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* 148.

[18]Ibid., 131.

> must have the highest penalty; this is how God's justice system works. . . . [T]hese elements give the sense an ultimate gravity to the situation behind the law. Such ideas of the seriousness of the law and God's wrath exceed the ANE perspective on the practice.[19]

In conclusion, the OT speaks clearly about judicial penalty for sin.

Sacrifice in the OT

In order to demonstrate that animal sacrifices in the OT teach penal substitution, the student of Scripture must first understand twelve basic principles regarding those sacrifices. First, *only believers should offer* OT sacrifices—believers who should be *indoctrinated* and *obedient* (i.e., exhibiting *right teaching* and *right behavior*). Leviticus 1:2-3 and 2:1 speak of Israelite believers, while 17:8 and 22:18, 25 speak of foreign believers (cf. Num 15:14-16; Isa 56:6-8). Second, OT sacrifices *should be the outward demonstration of a vital faith*. Without faith the sacrifices were worthless (cf. Heb 11:4; 1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 51:15-19; Isa 1:11-15; Mic 6:6-8). Third, OT sacrifices *did not save from sin or forgive sins*. Levitical sacrifices include no provision for removing or doing away with any individual's sinful nature. Animal sacrifices are insufficient to atone fully and finally for the sins of human beings—only a human life can atone fully for a human life (cp. Lev 1:3 with Ps 49:5-9; cf. Gal 3:10-14; Heb 10:1-18; 1 Pet 1:18-19). Fourth, OT sacrifices *did not take care of every sin—especially willful, defiant sin*. Many sins required capital punishment—no animal sacrifice could avail for such sin[20] (Lev 24:10-23; Num 15:30). Premeditated and deliberate sin required the death of the sinner.[21] Therefore, due to voluntary, deliberate sin, each individual found himself under sentence of death and, due to the universality of sin, death reigned, as evidenced by the genealogies recording those deaths (cf. Gen 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31). "Died," as a repetitious term provided the epitaph for person after person (cf. 11:32; 23:2; 35:19; 50:26 et al.). This raises a fitting pair of questions: Was there really no sacrifice for deliberate sin? And, is there no forgiveness for such deliberate rebellion?

Fifth, OT sacrifices *had fellowship with God as their chief object.* They outwardly symbolized forgiveness for sins, which resulted in *continued communion with the covenant-keeping God of Israel* (Exod 29:42-43; 30:36). Listen to Oswalt:

> [W]hile temporal punishment for sin is serious and ought not to be dismissed, it is by no

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[19]Abner Twain Chou, "Chapter Two: Exegesis of Deuteronomy 21:22–23," in "The King, The Curse, and The Cross: The Intertextual Impact of Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in Prophetic and Apostolic Hermeneutics" (unpublished draft of Th.D. dissertation research, The Master's Seminary, 2008) 84.

[20]That no sacrifice is available for capital offenses does not mean that God does not or cannot forgive capital offenses. Legal consequences require death. Such consequences should not be confused with one's ultimate spiritual relationship to God.

[21]Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (1964; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1975) 67.

> means as serious as spiritual punishment: alienation from God. This is what the entire sacrificial system is about: making it possible for sinful humans to have fellowship with a holy God. The sacrifices do not mitigate the temporal effects of sin, so what do they do? They deal with the spiritual effects of sin; they address the truths that the soul that sins shall die (not merely physically; Ezek. 18:4, 20), and that there is no forgiveness for sin apart from the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22).[22]

The sixth principle consists of the fact that OT sacrifices *declared, emphasized, and magnified sin and its consequences* (Rom 3:19-20; 5:20a; 7:5-11; Gal 3:21-22). Seventh, OT sacrifices *declared, emphasized, and magnified God's holiness, righteousness, love, grace, mercy, and sovereignty* (Ps 119:62; Neh 9:13; Matt 23:23; Rom 7:12). The combination of the sixth and seventh principles expressed the dual function of sacrifice in the OT. Sin is essentially "theofugal,"[23] i.e., it leads mankind away from God. Sacrifice, displaying by its bloodshed the terrible nature and consequences of sin, was theocentric, turning the sinner's attention to the effects of his sin on God. His sin was enmity against God, alienating him from God, and proving his rebellion against divine authority and character.[24] His sacrifice propitiated[25] God's just wrath and reconciled him to God.

Eighth, OT sacrifices *demonstrated that there was no totally independent access to God for the OT believer under Mosaic legislation* (Heb 9:8-10). Ninth, OT sacrifices *demonstrated that God's desire with regard to His people's offering (giving) did not exceed their normal ability*. The sacrificial objects (cattle, sheep, goats, doves; flour, oil, wine, and frankincense) were all immediately available to the individual Israelite. God did not require that His people bring something exotic or beyond their normal means. He did not require them to extend themselves to the point of either financial discomfort or disaster (cf. 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8–9). Tenth, OT sacrifices *emphasized the ministry of the priesthood* (Lev 1:9; 2:8; 4:20; 6:6; Hebrews 5–10; 1 Pet 2:5). Eleventh, OT sacrifices *involved the recognition of God's covenant with His people* (Lev 2:13; Ps 50:5, 16). Finally, God commanded OT sacrifices *for the maintenance of the priesthood*. The covenant community provided for those who minister (Lev 7:34–35; Neh 13:5; Mal 3:8-10).

In summary, the above twelve principles provide evidence that sacrifices

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[22]John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 385.

[23]Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* 60.

[24]Schreiner rightly distinguishes this understanding of vicarious sacrifice from the errant anthropocentric Christus Victor view, healing or therapeutic view, and kaleidoscopic view of Gregory A. Boyd, Bruce R. Reichenbach, and Joel B. Green, respectively. Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution Response," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006) 149. Cf. the note below, citing Milgrom.

[25]"Propitiation has to do with the offended God, not the offender of God " (William D. Barrick, *The Extent of the Perfect Sacrifice of Christ* [Sun Valley, Calif.: GBI Publishing, 2002] 14)

dealt primarily with corporate worship.[26] They were corporate in the sense that OT believers brought offerings publicly to the sanctuary where the priests participated in the accompanying rituals. Benefits from the sacrifices might be personal or individual, but there was no private sacrifice. The Passover lamb might appear to be private since it involved one's household, but passersby could see the blood on the doorposts at the entrance to the home—and the lamb could be shared with a neighbor (Exod 12:4). OT sacrifices were confessional, because they demonstrated faith in Yahweh and obedience to His statutes and laws. By offering sacrifices the OT believer identified himself outwardly with the covenant God and His covenant people. That outward demonstration should have been the result of true faith. However, when that initiating faith was absent, the sacrifice is worthless—an empty gesture, devoid of any spiritual value (i.e., a false confession). God hated false sacrifice and could not accept it as true worship (cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:13-15).

With these principles in mind, a consideration of texts in the OT dealing with penal substitutionary sacrifices is the next step. In order to limit the study for this article, the discussion will bypass the ram provided by the Angel of the LORD as a substitute for Isaac in Genesis 22:1-14.[27] Merrill offers an excellent treatment in his volume on OT theology. He states that Isaac's own death "was enacted through a substitute, an animal whose literal death provided full satisfaction to God's demands."[28]

Exodus 12—The Passover

Just prior to Israel's exodus from Egypt, God instituted the Passover observance in which the lamb of the Passover served as a substitutionary sacrifice for the Israelites' firstborn sons. In Exod 12:3 the Lord instructed Moses concerning the sacrifice of the Passover lamb: "[T]hey are each to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household." Taking "for

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[26]See John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement and Its Relationship to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life*, 6th ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1886) 155-56, identifies the relationship between the sacrificial system and worship as follows: "Not to deliver from punishment, but to cleanse and purify for worship, was the blood of the victim shed. Not the receiving of any manner of reward for righteousness, but the being holy and accepted worshippers, was the benefit received through being sprinkled with the victim's blood." He appeals to Heb 9:14 ("how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, *cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*?" (emphasis in the original). Elsewhere in this volume he seems to diminish if not deny penal substitution (ibid., 99-102).

[27]Youngblood, *The Heart of the Old Testament* 84, declares that substitution of one life for another is an underlying principle of sacrifice in the OT. Regarding Genesis 22, he writes, "The tension-filled story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 dramatically illustrates the principles of the gift of life and the substitution of life" (ibid.).

[28]Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B & H, 2006) 236 (234-37).

themselves" and "for each household" as datives of advantage or benefit is best.[29] Such an interpretation of the Hebrew might imply substitution. In addition, the sacrifice appeared to forestall the penalty of death for those who were within the household—especially firstborn sons. Although the lamb signified substitution, the text does not state that the blood atones or expiates;[30] it only protects and preserves the household from divine wrath. Durham states only that the sacrificial animal (which, according to v. 5, could be sheep or goat) provided protection—he does not identify it as vicarious or as penal substitution.[31]

According to v. 12, the Lord would execute judgment as He passed through the land of Egypt. Israelites who followed the instructions and applied the blood of the slaughtered lamb to the doorposts of their houses would escape that judgment (vv. 13, 23, 27). Indeed, the Israelites escaped death (v. 30). How can this be? What have the Israelites done that would merit death? Why would they be subject to death and judgment like the Egyptians? According to Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach,[32] two texts help explain the matter: Exod 12:12, indicating that the death of the firstborn of Egypt provided judgment against the gods of the Egyptians, and Ezek 20:4-10, revealing that the Israelites participated in idolatry while in Egypt (esp. vv. 7-8). Joshua 24:14 confirms that the Israelites worshiped idols while they were sojourning in Egypt ("Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD"). Indeed, Israelite idolatry in Egypt caused the Lord to respond in wrath and to pour out judgment upon them (v. 8). Just like the Egyptians, the Israelites came under sentence of death. What a surprise that proves to the Israelites who were comfortable with the preceding sequence of nine plagues as long as the Egyptians are the ones suffering! But, as Ryken states, "The Israelites were as guilty as the Egyptians, and in the final plague God taught them about their sin and his salvation."[33] Yahweh's judgments upon the gods of Egypt proved that "the gods, both severally and totally, of any sort and any status, could not save anyone or anything

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[29]Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 207-8 (§11.2.10d).

[30]Ibid., 368.

[31]John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987) 163.

[32]Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions* 38.

[33]Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2005) 326. Ryken cites Motyer's written comment: "There were two nations in the land of Egypt, but they were both resistant to the word of God; and if God comes in judgment none will escape" (ibid., citing J. Alec Motyer, "Old Testament Covenant Theology" [unpublished lectures, London's Theological Students Fellowship, 1973] 13).

from death."[34] Psalm 49 teaches the same truth, but focuses on mankind being unable to provide such deliverance—only God can provide the "ransom" payment that He requires (vv. 7-9, 15).[35]

By providing the Passover sacrifice, the Lord kept His name from pollution (Exod 12:9) and He graciously spared guilty Israelites by means of the sacrificial blood of animals in the observance. According to Leon Morris, "the obvious symbolism is that a death has taken place, and this death substitutes for the death of the firstborn."[36] Waltke agrees, describing the Passover lamb as "both substitutionary and propitiatory. It *nullifies* God's wrath against sinful people because it *satisfies* God's holiness."[37] Once again it is evident that divine wrath on sinners relates to the penalty aspect of penal substitution.

The NT confirms the substitutionary nature of the Passover sacrifice. In 1 Cor 5:7 Paul understands the substitutionary nature of the Passover lamb and, at minimum, draws an analogy with it and Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

Leviticus 16—The Day of Atonement

Unger presents the following overview of the Torah's first three books: "Genesis is the book of beginnings, Exodus the book of redemption, and Leviticus the book of atonement and a holy walk. In Genesis we see man ruined; in Exodus, man redeemed; in Leviticus, man cleansed, worshiping and serving."[38] Leviticus speaks of more than just cleansing for sinners and preparation for worship. It describes how sinful persons might enter the presence of the holy God. Harrison observes that

> Leviticus is thus a work of towering spirituality, which through the various sacrificial rituals points the reader unerringly to the atoning death of Jesus, our great High Priest. An eminent nineteenth-century writer once described Leviticus quite correctly as the seed-bed of New Testament theology, for in this book is to be found the basis of Christian faith and doctrine.[39]

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[34]Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville: B & H, 2006) 280. Unfortunately, Stuart says virtually nothing about penal substitution and its relationship to the Passover lamb other than to see it as a type of Christ.

[35]Cf. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion* 588, writes with reference to Ps 49:14-15, "This glimpse into immortality, if not resurrection, marks a high point of Old Testament revelation with respect to the matter of the state of the righteous after death and in the hereafter."

[36]Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* 117.

[37]Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 382 (emphasis in the original).

[38]Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) 85.

[39]R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980) 9.

On the one hand, the holiness theme of Leviticus reveals the bad news that God's holiness cannot allow for sinful human beings to have access to Him. On the other hand, however, Leviticus presents the good news that God provides a means for sinners to be accepted and to enter His presence through levitical sacrifices.

Of all of the sacrifices and festivals, the Day of Atonement exceeds all others in its significance to Israel's relationship to the Lord. According to Mays, this festival was "the climax and crown of Israel's theology of sanctification."[40] Its historical setting belongs to God's judgment on Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20)—a stark reminder of the holiness of God and its incompatibility with human sinfulness. Emphasis thus fell on the necessity of atonement even for the priests' own sins. If the priests were defiled, they could not mediate between the people and God. Without mediators, sinful Israelites could not approach God's presence and the Presence of God could not continue to reside in their midst.

The "scapegoat" symbolized the removal of sin from the presence of God's glory in the midst of His people (see Ps 103:12 and Mic 7:19). "Scapegoat" (Tyndale's translation of *'Azazel*) is not mentioned again in the OT or the NT (see esp. Hebrews 8–10). On the Day of Atonement it as well as the other goat sufficed as a sin offering (Lev 16:5).[41] *'Azazel* is most likely a general reference to the wilderness to which the goat was banished.[42] Good arguments can also be made for taking the Hebrew term as meaning "removal."[43] Whatever the meaning, it does not materially alter the essential nature of the ritual.

Milgrom takes the view that the scapegoat was not an offering nor was it a vicarious substitute for Israel.[44] According to him, the text does not mention any slaughter of the goat as a sacrifice, or sprinkling or pouring out of its blood, or any concept of atonement, propitiation, or expiation. Next, the text does not indicate that the goat was punished or put to death in place of the congregation of Israel. The

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[40]James Luther Mays, *The Book of Leviticus, The Book of Numbers*, Layman's Bible Commentary (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977) 52.

[41]Some interpreters see an allusion to this goat in Isa 53:6 and Heb 13:12 (Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC 3A [Nashville: B&H, 2000) 221, 226.

[42]Ibid., 216-17.

[43]Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 319. See J. E. Hartley, "Atonement, Day of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003) 59, for arguments that '*Azazel* (v. 8) is the name of a demon.

[44]Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 1021. Milgrom rejects the concept of substitution here, because he believes that substitution "presupposes demonic attack and the appeasement of threatening demons" (ibid., 1079). A Mesopotamian ritual to transfer impurity from an individual afflicted by a fever forms the basis for this presupposition. See also Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* 131-32. Perhaps this association results from what Walton sees as an absence of "intention to appease the anger of deity or demon" (ibid., 132) in the Day of Atonement rituals.

scapegoat's "expressed purpose . . . is to carry off the sins of the Israelites transferred to it by the high priest's confession."[45] Goldingay concurs, observing that it is "not that the goat is thus made responsible for these wrongdoings and has to suffer for them; it simply carries them away somewhere."[46]

However, the description of laying hands on the head of the goat (vv. 21-22) outwardly depicted transference of sins from Israel to the living goat. It served as their substitute—condemned to die in the wilderness, isolated from Israel.[47] The scapegoat carried upon it "all the iniquities" of the Israelites (v. 22).

In addition, vv. 24 and 29-34 indicate that "the entire ritual, not simply the scapegoat procedure, atones for the sins of the priests and the people."[48] Snaith, discussing the views of Rabbi Ishmael, mentions that "in all cases of deliberate sin, the Day of Atonement at most combines with repentance to suspend punishment, but is never itself efficacious even for that, still less for atonement."[49] There is a certain sense in which Rabbi Ishmael is correct. Paul wrote, that God displayed Jesus Christ "publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Rom 3:25). In some fashion the Day of Atonement appears to have anticipated the Messiah's propitiatory sacrifice by His own blood. Thus, having planned it just that way (cp. Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 1:18-21; Rev 13:8), God could suspend the penalty in the light of its ultimate, full removal through Christ's perfect and complete atonement. Suspension of the penalty applied equally to believer and unbeliever alike within Israel, because the "grace period" involved the temporary benefits of remote substitution, as compared to the permanent and full application of intimate substitution.[50]

Did the ritual of the Day of Atonement indicate the penal aspect of

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[45]Ibid., 1023. The two-handed laying on of hands (v. 21) declares, "'This one is guilty; he/she is worthy of death'" (ibid., 1041).

[46]John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 2005) 516.

[47]Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006) 84. Cf. note 45 above citing Milgrom.

[48]Frank S. Thielman, "The Atonement," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, eds. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 106. Cf. Baruch Levine, *Leviticus*, Jewish Publication Society Tanach Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 108; and Waltke with Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* 467.

[49]Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* 68.

[50]See Barrick, *The Extent of the Perfect Sacrifice of Christ* 5-10 for an explanation of the meaning and relationship of the remote and intimate aspects of vicarious sacrifice.

substitution by explication or by implication?[51] According to Milgrom, *kippēr* represents "the phenomenon of the 'substitute' or 'ransom,' the substance to which the evil is transferred and thereupon eliminated."[52] The situations in which this term carries this meaning include the law of census in which the ransom averts the penalty of plague when the law is violated (Exod 30:12-16), laws regarding homicide in which death is the penalty for the crime (Num 35:31-33; Deut 21:1-9), the matter of the Levites guarding the sanctuary's sanctity so that there be no wrath or plague or death on the congregation (Num 1:53; 8:19; 18:22-23—cp. the case of Phinehas, Num 3:32 and 25:11), the inability of Babylon to ransom herself from divine judgment (Isa 47:11; cf. Psalm 49), and blood's sacrificial and atoning significance (Lev 17:11).[53] Thus, the use of the term *kippēr* explicitly related to both substitution and penalty.

The Day of Atonement was the central observance of the levitical system.[54] It emphasizes, more than any other observance, the holiness of God and the sinfulness of His people. For Israel the Day of Atonement provided cleansing or purification so that they might have access to the presence of Yahweh.[55] It emphasized the lack of direct access to God by anyone at any time under the Mosaic legislation. Therefore, the Day of Atonement is the point of comparison with regard to the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 8–10. The chief point of the Epistle to the Hebrews (see 8:1) is in direct contrast to the chief point of the Mosaic Law (see 9:8).

As Paul House explains, "The offerings in this chapter [Lev 16] are substitutionary, for each animal is accepted in place of the people's pervasive, penetrating sins. This principle is especially obvious in 16:21-22, since the sins of the people are placed on the goat that goes to its death (presumably) in the desert."[56] In summary, the Day of Atonement *expiated* the nation's sins, *cleansed* the sanctuary from the pollution caused by those sins, and *removed* those sins from the community.[57]

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[51]Hartmut Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981) 114, argues that the concept of penal substitution is absent.

[52]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* 1082.

[53]Ibid., 1082-83.

[54]Rooker, *Leviticus* 213: "Since Leviticus 16 occupies the central position in the book (and of the Law as a whole), it is the consummation of the previous fifteen chapters and provides the spiritual energy and motivation to carry out the imperatives of Leviticus 17–27."

[55]Ross, *Holiness to the LORD* 318-21, 323; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Dallas: Word, 1992) 228.

[56]Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998) 139.

[57]Hartley, "Atonement, Day of" 55.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

What a text Isa 52:13–53:13 is and what a mixed reception it has experienced! As Hermisson declares, "this great text will remain controversial until kingdom come."[58] Modern non-evangelical scholars come to this passage with radical presuppositions that put the text in jeopardy. For example, Spieckermann assumes that Leviticus 16 was probably written later than Isaiah 53.[59] Adhering to a post-exilic date for the material and the theological concepts it represents results in identifying vicarious suffering as a new idea from a source outside the OT in post-exilic times.[60] In fact, according to some scholars who assume a purely human identification, the date for the text's composition follows the suffering and death of the Servant.[61] Some evangelical scholars approach this text stressing its supposed ambiguity. For example, Robert Chisholm claims that its language "certainly allows for the servant's suffering to be vicarious (note esp. 'he will justify many'), but it does not demand such an interpretation in and of itself."[62] Thus, he advises "that it not be used as a basis for any dogmatic conclusions about the nature of the servant's suffering."[63] Instead, he decides that later revelation (viz., the Gospel of Matthew) clarifies its meaning.[64] However, even though Jesus' death and resurrection realize Isaiah 53's full potential, he insists that "in its ancient context [it] could be understood merely as stereotypical and hyperbolic."[65] Some theologians, like Waltke, are less ambivalent or cautious, simply declaring that Isaiah 52:13–53:12 "celebrates the gospel of Jesus Christ."[66]

First, note that Isaiah describes the sufferings of the Servant of Yahweh whose griefs and sorrows are not his own.[67] That fact appears to identify the

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[58]Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "The Fourth Servant Song in the Context of Second Isaiah," in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 17.

[59]Hermann Spieckermann, "The Conception and Prehistory of the Idea of Vicarious Suffering in the Old Testament," in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 3.

[60]Ibid., 15.

[61]Hermisson, "The Fourth Servant Song in the Context of Second Isaiah" 33.

[62]Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "A Theology of Isaiah," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991) 331.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid., 331, 332-33.

[65]Ibid., 333.

[66]Waltke with Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* 845.

[67]Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 3:345; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993) 429; David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah: The Sufferings of the Messiah and the Glory That Should Follow* (1920; reprint, Minneapolis: James Family Christian Publishers, 1978) 83-84,

Servant's sufferings as substitutionary (cp. v. 4, "our suffering").[68] As Motyer observes, "The substitutionary imagery of verse 6c ("the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him") is drawn straight from Leviticus 16."[69] Oswalt responds to those who claim that the concept of substitutionary (or, vicarious) sacrifice arose from Christian theology via Hellenism (e.g., Harry Orlinsky[70]) by saying, "But I suspect the opposite is true: if it were not for the vicarious element in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, which has so many analogues in Isa. 53, there would be no barrier to recognizing the obvious substitutionary elements in that chapter."[71] Contrary to what might appear to be an open and shut case, Chisholm suggests that the "translation '*for* our transgressions/iniquities' in verse 5 is perhaps too interpretive,"[72] since it might better be rendered "because of." Secondly, the language of Isaiah 53 clearly includes the penal aspect (cp. v. 5, "pierced . . . crushed . . . chastising . . . scourging").

An additional argument against penal substitution comes from scholars who argue that the LXX appears to deny any vicariousness to the Servant's suffering. For example, Reventlow writes, "whereas the expression ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (ἡμῶν) is the characteristic expression for indicating the connection between Jesus' suffering and the sins of the first Christians (see 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18), no formulation with ὑπέρ can be detected in the Septuagint text of Isaiah 53 (only διά and περί)."[73] Morna Hooker uses the διά (*dia*) references in Isa 53:5 and 12 to argue that "the Servant suffered *as a result of* the sins of others. This is certainly not vicarious in the substitutionary sense; after all, it could be said of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust, that they were wounded because of Hitler's transgressions, crushed as a

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89, 107; Robert D. Culver, *The Sufferings and the Glory of the Lord's Righteous Servant* (Moline, Ill.: Christian Service Foundation, 1958) 73-75.

[68]House, *Old Testament Theology* 290; John Murray, "The Atonement," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols. (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 2:148, "This is strikingly brought to our attention in the Old Testament passage which perhaps more than any other portrays for us the vicarious work of Christ (Isa. 52:13–53:12)."

[69]Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 429, 430, 431. Cf. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD* 321.

[70]Harry M. Orlinsky, "The So-called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," in *Studies in the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah*, by Harry M. Orlinsky and Norman H. Snaith, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967) 54, 73-74, 118.

[71]Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* 377 n. 71.

[72]Chisholm, "A Theology of Isaiah" 331.

[73]Henning Graf Reventlow, "Basic Issues in the Interpretation of Isaiah 53," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, eds. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1998) 28.

result of his iniquities."[74] Such conclusions fail, however, to consider key NT references employing περί (*peri*, including an apparent echo of Isa 53 in Matt 26:28, "For this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out **for many** [περὶ πολλῶν, *peri pollōn*] for forgiveness of sins").[75] In addition, περί parallels ὑπέρ (*huper*) in 1 Pet 3:18 and Heb 5:3, indicating virtually identical meaning. A simpler explanation of περὶ ἁμαρτίας (*peri hamartias*) in Isa 53:10 consists of the fact that the LXX sometimes uses that phrase to translate *ʾāšām* (see 2 Kgs 12:17 [Eng., 16]).[76]

Hooker admits that vv. 4 and 12, with their references to bearing diseases and sins "of many," require a different treatment. However, she continues to insist on a non-substitutionary sense:

> The suffering which he endured belonged by right to his people. What we have is not "vicarious suffering," *if* by that we mean substitutionary suffering—the anomalous "exclusive place-taking" which is without parallel in Old Testament thought; rather we have an example of "*inclusive* place-taking" or of what we in English normally term "representation."[77]

Goldingay allows a substitutionary meaning only in the sense that the servant's "offering of himself as an *ʾāšām* substituted for anything they might offer, their own selves or any other reparation. It is representative in the sense that he is treated by the authorities in the way they might treat a king, and in the sense that he makes his offering on their behalf like a priest and they then come to identify with it."[78]

Two items, appealing to the LXX's use of prepositions and observing that the NT seldom refers to statements in Isaiah 53 that support penal substitution, rely on the assumption that the LXX presents an accurate and dependable translation of Isaiah 53. David Sapp masterfully analyzes the Masoretic Text (MT), LXX, and the first scroll of Isaiah from Qumran Cave 1 (1QIsa), identifying ten statements in Isaiah 53 relating Yahweh's Servant to the sins of others. Then he concludes that the MT

> can be easily read as proclaiming the Christian gospel. . . . But whether or not the translators of the LXX saw these statements this way is another question that depends on vv. 9-11. . . . [T]hose verses in the LXX have nothing in them to support the death and

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[74]Morna D. Hooker, "Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?" in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, eds. William H. Bellinger, Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1998) 96-97.

[75]See also Rom 8:3; Gal 1:4; Heb 5:3; 10:8, 18, 26; 13:11; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

[76]Usually περὶ ἁμαρτίας translates חַטָּאת (*ḥaṭṭāʾṯ*), "sin offering" (cp. Lev 5:7). Cf. Martin Hengel with Daniel P. Bailey, "The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period," in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 125 n. 182.

[77]Hooker, "Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?" 97.

[78]Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55* 488.

> resurrection of the messianic Servant of the Lord. Only the Hebrew text describes the death of the Messiah and alludes to his resurrection.[79]

In other words, Philip (viz. Acts 8), Peter, and Paul do not quote from or allude to the LXX of vv. 9-11b, because "vv. 9a and 10-11b in the LXX rewrite the outcome of the Servant's suffering, excising his sacrificial death and therefore his implied resurrection."[80] The LXX fails to preserve the text of Isaiah 53 in a fashion that makes reference to it possible by the NT writers, whose readers rely heavily upon the LXX. Just as for any other translation, the translators made theological decisions that affected the meaning of the text and its viability for citation.

Although Jewish commentators and theologians tend to identify the Servant with "exiled Israel idealized,"[81] some seem to recognize the vicarious nature of the Servant's accomplishments as described in Isaiah 53. Slotki, for example, commenting on v. 5 ("for our welfare"), writes, "That we may procure well-being, he having been punished for our guilt."[82] At vv. 4-6 he states, "It is now frankly acknowledged that he was the victim who bore the dire penalties which the iniquities of others have incurred."[83] Apparently this latter comment presents the Servant as an innocent representative without necessarily being a substitute in Slotki's opinion.[84]

Verse 7's "humbled Himself" (same root word employed for "afflicted" in v. 4) indicates that the Servant of Yahweh exhibits a "clear-headed, self-restraining voluntariness"[85] with regard to bearing the penalty for the iniquities of "many." This was not some sort of abuse or forced action, but a willing sacrifice. Yahweh's Servant is "not caught in a web of events, but masterfully deciding, accepting and submitting."[86] Verses 10 ("when His soul sets itself as a guilt-offering") and 12 ("poured out himself to death") make that same point regarding the Servant's voluntary sacrifice.[87] Meanwhile, even though v. 12 explicitly refers to death, Chisholm is reluctant to give up what he sees as an ambiguous text. He points to

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[79]David A. Sapp, "The LXX, 1QIsa, and MT Versions of Isaiah 53 and the Christian Doctrine of Atonement," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, eds. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1998) 185.

[80]Ibid., 186.

[81]I. W. Slotki, *Isaiah*, Soncino Books of the Bible (1949; reprint, London: Soncino Press, 1967) 261.

[82]Ibid., 262.

[83]Ibid.

[84]See Slotki's comments on vv. 8, 9, 10-12, and 10 (ibid., 263-64).

[85]Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* 432.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Being a voluntary sacrifice provides an answer to those who would claim that a substitutionary sacrifice is unfair and unjust, according to Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 816-17.

other OT passages utilizing hyperbolic language about physical death when they describe nothing more than life-threatening circumstances.[88] Therefore, he opts to rely on subsequent NT revelation, rather than the exegesis of the OT text itself to determine its ultimate meaning.[89] His colleague at Dallas Theological Seminary, Eugene Merrill, concludes differently, not only espousing the penal substitutionary sacrifice of the Messiah in Isaiah 53, but stating that the prophet himself understood what he was writing:

> By reflection on his person and experience, it became clear to the prophet that this servant of the Lord was suffering vicariously for us, that is, for Israel and, by extension, for the whole world (vv. 4–6). . . . Most astounding of all, what he did was in compliance with the will of God who, through the servant's death and subsequent resurrection (thus implicitly in vv. 10b–11a), will justify sinners on the basis of the servant's substitutionary role (v. 11b). Then finally, in God's time, he will reign triumphant, having gained victory over sin and death (v. 12).[90]

Indeed, Yahweh's Servant meets all requirements for being a substitutionary sacrifice: (1) identification with condemned sinners (v. 8, "for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due"), (2) being blameless and without any stain or spot to mar His sacrifice (v. 9, "no violence . . . no deceit"; v. 11, "the righteous one"),[91] and (3) being acceptable to Yahweh (v. 10, "the LORD was pleased to crush Him").[92]

It must also be noted that "by oppression and judgment" (or, "justice," v. 8) refers to the judicial aspect of the penalty that the Servant bore. Goldingay, however, plays down any legal or judicial reference or concept in Isaiah 53. He claims that

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[88]Chisholm, "A Theology of Isaiah" 332.

[89]This approach creates conflict between the NT interpretation and the OT text within its own context. Such conflict allows NT writers to utilize the OT text for a meaning not intended or understood by the human authors.

[90]Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion* 514.

[91]Hartley states that the scapegoat could not be slaughtered as a sacrifice, "because it carries the people's sins, this goat was unclean, thus disqualifying it as a sacrifice" (Hartley, *Leviticus* 238). If the servant is a mere human being (the prophet himself or even the nation of Israel), the same problem would arise. This is one of the reasons why people cannot serve as the ransom or atonement price for anyone else (see Psalm 49). Such truths make it necessary that Yahweh's Servant in Isaiah 53 be someone who cannot be tainted even by carrying or bearing the sins of many—viz., he must be a person of the godhead. Hartley concludes his exegesis of Leviticus 16 by asking, "In what way does Jesus' death correlate with the ritual of the goat released to Azazel?" (ibid., 245). Jesus bore the people's sins (2 Cor 5:21; cf. Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 2:24); He died outside the camp (cf. Heb 13:12; John 19:17; Matt 21:39; Luke 20:15); and He took all sins to hell (based upon the Apostles' Creed and Hartley's identification of Azazel as either a chief demon or Satan himself, ibid., 238).

[92]Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* 433. Cf. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah: Volume II, Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971) 229: "[I]t all again and again adds up to vicarious atonement, stated and restated, defined and redefined."

"Christian interpretation and appropriation of 52.13–53.12 has . . . been complicated by the fact that Christian understanding of God's relationship with the world has come to be dominated by a legal model."[93] He believes that such a model "did not play a significant part in OT understanding of sacrifice."[94]

Bible translations vary in rendering the clause in verse 10 (נַפְשׁוֹ אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם, *'im-tāśîm 'āšām napšô*) in which the verb can be parsed as a third person feminine singular (taking "his soul" as the subject, since *nepeš* is a feminine noun) or as a second person masculine singular (with "you" finding its antecedent in "the LORD"/"Yahweh"). But, this would be the only time in the entire passage (52:13–53:12) that Yahweh serves as a second person reference.[95] Yahweh's servant is a guilt-offering, "a sin-bearing sacrifice which removes sin and imputes righteousness (11-12ab) and as a voluntary self-identification and interposition (12c-f)."[96]

Why does the prophet identify the sacrifice of Yahweh's Servant as a "guilt-offering" (*'āšām*, v. 10)? Young concludes that the prophet does not use the term technically, "but the word stands generically for expiatory sacrifice."[97] Baron distinguishes between it and the sin offering (*ḥaṭṭā't*) as follows: "while the sin offering looked to the sinful state of the offerer, the trespass offering was appointed to meet *actual transgressions*, the fruit of the sinful state. The sin offering set forth propitiation, the trespass offering set forth satisfaction."[98] Culver agrees, pointing out that the Servant thus paid "to God every debt we owed Him."[99] Interestingly, Goldingay focuses on the "financial imagery of restitution" which "may also reflect a link between the notion of *'āšām* and that of *kōper* (compensation or ransom)."[100]

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[93]Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55* 484.

[94]Ibid. See also John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology, Volume Two: Israel's Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006) 412.

[95]Hermisson suggests a conjectural emendation redividing the first two words of the clause to obtain the reading אֲמָת שָׂם (*'emeṯ śām*) resulting in "yet *he truly made* his life the means of wiping out guilt" (italics added to indicate the translation of the new reading) (Hermisson, "The Fourth Servant Song in the Context of Second Isaiah" 28). The sole occurrence of the second person in this passage is in 52:14 where the antecedent is the Servant, not Yahweh. However, it does provide an instance in which the normal third person reference to the Servant surprisingly changes to the second person as though a direct address. A textual variant changes that 2ms pronominal suffix (cp. 1QIsa[a] עלכה, *'lkh*) to a 3ms pronominal suffix (supported by two medieval Hebrew manuscripts, the Syriac Peshitta, the Targums, and Theodotion's Greek translation), which a number of English versions follow (e.g., NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJPS, NJB, NLT).

[96]Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* 437.

[97]Young, *The Book of Isaiah* 3:355.

[98]Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah* 121.

[99]Culver, *The Sufferings and the Glory of the Lord's Righteous Servant* 110.

[100]Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55* 487. This link does not exist between the two nouns, but does exist between *'āšām* and the verb *kippēr* in Leviticus 5–7 and 14. The noun *kōper* links with the verb *kippēr* in Exod 30:11-16 and Num 35:30-34.

A better approach recognizes that the *ʾāšām* sacrifice involves both unintentional sin (Lev 5:15-19) and intentional sin (such as theft or fraud, Lev 6:1-5; 19:20-22).[101] Since most sacrifices deal only with unintentional sin, any ultimately efficacious atoning sacrifice must go beyond those sacrifices to provide expiation for intentional sins. This answers an earlier question regarding the availability of sacrifice for deliberate sin. Yes, the Servant's perfect sacrifice takes care of deliberate sin and provides forgiveness for deliberate rebellion. In addition, the *ʾāšām*, rather than purifying, sanctifies—it reconsecrates Israel as a holy nation, restoring them to the land and to their God.[102] The Servant's perfect *ʾāšām* offering meets these needs—needs unmet by the levitical system.[103]

Motyer summarizes verse 11 by pointing out six separate elements of the atoning work of Yahweh's Servant:

> Isaiah 53:11 is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned. (i) The Servant knows the needs to be met and what must be done. (ii) As 'that righteous one, my servant' he is both fully acceptable to the God our sins have offended and has been appointed by him to his task. (iii) As righteous, he is free from every contagion of our sin. (iv) He identified himself personally with our sin and need. (v) The emphatic pronoun 'he' underlines his personal commitment to this role. (vi) He accomplishes the task fully. Negatively, in the bearing of iniquity; positively, in the provision of righteousness.[104]

Even von Rad classifies the Servant's sacrifice as vicarious and substitutionary: "he makes his life a substitute (שים אשם), he makes righteous (הצדיק), he pours out his life (הערה), he acts vicariously (הפגיע)."[105]

Having considered all the key elements of Isaiah 53 and the variety of viewpoints, the simplest and most straightforward meaning of the text rests with the concept of penal substitution. When the text speaks for itself, it speaks without any ambiguity. The NT writers appear to have understood the plain intent of the prophet rightly, finding every reason to take the text as directly Messianic. Take Mark 10:43-45 as one example. Note the parallels: the suffering Servant of Yahweh (Isa 52:13) is the "servant of all" (Mark 10:44; cp. Isa 53:6, "all of us"), Who is "great" (Mark 10:43) because He is "high and lifted up, and greatly exalted" (Isa 52:13). As "slave," He gave Himself (lit., "His soul") as a guilt offering (Isa 53:10—the direct equivalent

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[101]Thielman, "The Atonement" 107.

[102]See Richard E. Averbeck, "אָשַׁם," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 1:564.

[103]See Eugene Carpenter and Michael A. Grisanti, "אָשַׁם," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997) 1:556, for a brief discussion of the issue.

[104]Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* 442.

[105]Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 2:257.

of "to give His life a ransom" (Mark 10:45, τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ [*tēn psuchēn autou*], lit., "his soul").[106] The Servant's *ʾāšām*/*lutron* rendered restitution, went above and beyond the penalty of sacrifice to cover intentional as well as unintentional sin in the place of "many" (Mark 10:45; Isa 52:14, 15 and 53:12).

Conclusion

This study merely scratches the surface of a rich trove of biblical evidence for penal substitution both as an ancient concept and as prophetic, in one way or another, of the Messiah's sacrificial work.

1. The OT's sacrificial system was founded upon a principle of penal substitution in order to propitiate the wrath of God in judgment for sin.
2. Passover presented the first clear picture of penal substitution attesting to death as the penalty as well as the death of the sacrifice.
3. The Day of Atonement demonstrated the centrality of the concept of penal substitution for the nation of Israel and their consecration as God's people in spite of their sins.
4. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 testifies that the Servant of Yahweh will bear the penal substitutionary sacrifice in place of a people in need of justification.

These do not represent the totality of OT revelation concerning penal substitution, but rise to the top as the most significant of the texts. The picture is clear, a position that is firm.

"The Power of the Cross,"[107] a popular and biblical contemporary song, resounds with echoes from the OT texts this study examines—especially Isaiah 53. Within its lines it speaks of penal substitution (depicting Christ becoming sin for us, taking the blame and bearingthe wrath) and expiation ("We stand forgiven at the cross"). The song echoes Isa 53:4 and 11, declaring that Christ bore "the awesome weight of sin." As it describes the torn curtain of the Temple, it reminds the singer of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. It alludes to the Passover (Exodus 12) when it declares that "life is mine to live." The final chorus sums it all up by announcing melodically that the slain Son of God as our substitute is "the pow'r of the cross." We will sing that anthem throughout all time.

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[106]Note how Mark parallels διάκονς (10:43) with διακονηθῆναι (v. 45) and δοῦλος (v. 44) with δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν (v. 45). The "servant" serves, but the "slave" dies for others.

[107]Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, "The Power of the Cross" (Eastbourne, UK: Thankyou Music, 2005), http://www.gettydirect.com/lyrics.asp?id=89 (accessed 24 June 2009).