

Wrested Scripture Straightened Out And Re-set

*“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,
that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”*

2 Corinthians 5:21

This passage of Scripture is one of those which are seriously wrested from their context and from their true sense, and made to support an idea that is very God-dishonouring. Let us therefore consider this passage, and let us do so in the following natural method, viz.-

1. The vital word
2. The verse itself
3. The chapter in which it occurs
4. Parallel Scripture elsewhere

1. The Vital Word

The important word is, of course, that which in the Authorised Version has been translated as “sin” (Greek – ‘hamartia’). According to the Greek Lexicons this word ‘hamartia’ may mean either “sin” or “sin-offering,” according to the sense required. It is found that when the Seventy Jewish Scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek they used that word ‘hamartia’ to signify both “sin” and “Sin-offering.” This explains much, for it was that Septuagint Translation which was in use in Paul’s day in Palestine.

Furthermore, we also find the same thing happens in the Hebrew, where several Hebrew words have each of those two separate meanings. And we must not forget that Paul, when writing to Corinth was writing to an assembly whose leaders were Jews, and an assembly which would appear from Acts 18 to be mainly Jewish. Those Jews would not misunderstand Paul’s use of that word ‘hamartia.’

Here then, are the Hebrew words mentioned, each of which has the two meanings:-

CHATAAH -

rendered “Sin” 7 times, as -

“Oh this people have sinned a great sin.” Exodus 32:31.

rendered “Sin Offering” once,

“burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required”

Psalm 40:6

CHATAATH -

rendered “Sin” 169 times, as -

“pardon our iniquity and our sin.” Exodus 34:9

rendered “Sin offering” 116 times as in

“Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering?” Leviticus 10:17.

rendered “Punishment” etc., 7 times.

CHATA -

rendered “Sin” 165 times, as -

“In all this Job sinned not” Job 1.22

rendered “Offer for sin” twice, as -

“Slew it, and offered it for sin” Leviticus 9:15

CHATTAAH -

rendered “Sin” twice, as -	
“Forgiving iniquity... and sin”	Exodus 34:7.
rendered “Sin offering” once -	
“For a sin offering for all Israel”	Ezekiel 6:17

ASHAM -

rendered “Sin” twice as -	
“Fools make a mock at sin”	Proverbs 14:9
rendered “Sin offering” once -	
“Make his soul an offering for sin”	Isaiah 53:10
rendered “trespass” 7 times,	
rendered “trespass offering” 35 times.	

ASHMAH -

rendered “Sin” 4 times and “Trespass” 11 times as -	
“Amon trespassed more and more”	2 Chron. 33:23.
rendered “Trespass Offering” once -	
“In the days of his trespass offering”	Leviticus 6:5.
Consistently with this, the Diaglott thus renders the verse in question :-	
“For Him who knew no sin, He made a sin-offering on our behalf.”	

2. The Verse

When we examine the verse itself we are confronted with this choice either to abandon the Christadelphian idea, or else to accept the doctrine of the personal pre-existence of Christ. For the actual Greek is, according to the interlinear Diaglott, and no Greek Scholar will dispute the rendering here, “Him not having known sin.”

The Lord Jesus Christ was made ‘hamartia’ at a time when it could be said of Him that He had not known sin. If this was at His conception, then He evidently must have existed as a person before then. (And if one says here that at His conception it could have been said of Him that He had not known sin - the same could be said of every human being ever born).

The truth is clear and simple; the Lord Jesus Christ was made a Sin Offering for us at a time when it could be said of Him that He had never sinned.

3. The Chapter

About what does Paul discourse in this chapter? Is it “sin nature” or is it actual transgressions? Look at the verse itself, “Who knew no sin.” What was that? Sin nature?

Look at verse 18; “not imputing their transgressions unto them.” Was that their sin nature?

Look at verse 17: “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.”

Is he “new” by having been released from his sin nature, or by having been released from his past sins? Surely this.

So in this chapter Paul likewise contrasts righteousness with sin as two opposites. But righteousness is not the opposite of sin nature, (for according to Christadelphian belief Christ possessed both simultaneously).

4. Parallel Scripture

First we will take a parallel passage from Leviticus and then one from Isaiah: “The priest that offereth it for sin (Chata) shall eat it.”

Leviticus 6:26:

We have seen some of the occurrences of this word ‘chata.’ Let us note here that while it is sometimes rendered as “offer for sin” it is 29 times rendered as “to make sin” and frequently as “cause of sin,” as “made Israel sin.” 1 Kings 15:30.

Now supposing that the Authorised Version translators had have translated this passage (Leviticus 6:26) according to words only, apart from sense, we should have read in our Bibles; “The priest that maketh it sin shall eat it” and the translators would have made a precisely similar mistake to the one they have made in 2 Corinthians 5:21 (N.B. “to be” are in italics).

It is the work of translators to give the sense, and not merely to translate according to dictionary equivalents, literally, without regard to sense or idiom. The translators of both passages should be uniform:-

Leviticus 6:26: “The priest that offereth it for sin.”

2 Corinthians 5:21: “offereth Him for sin,” or “made Him a sin offering”

When we look at Isaiah 53 we find there a phrase similar to the one under consideration. The English words vary, it is true, but we shall see that they do not vary in the original. “Make his soul an offering for sin.” We know that “his soul,” which in Hebrew is ‘nephesh,’ can alternatively be rendered as “Him.” And we have seen that here the phrase “Offering for sin” is ‘asham,’ which elsewhere is translated as “sin,” as in the example previously quoted. So that a variant translation of Isaiah 53:10 would be “make him sin,” which are the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21.

But it is Isaiah 53 that gives the right translation and 2 Corinthians 5:21 should be made to conform to that method of translation and not Isaiah made to conform to 2 Corinthians 5:21.

If there is any doubt concerning 2 Corinthians 5:21 as to whether it relates to Christ’s birth or crucifixion, there can be no doubt concerning Isaiah 53. There it is undoubtedly the crucifixion that is referred to.

Again, take a three-fold cord:-

- a. Isaiah 53:10:- “it pleased the Lord to... make his soul...”
 - b. 1 Peter 2:21:- “...because Christ also suffered for us...”
 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:21:- “For he hath made him (to be) sin for us...”
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- a. An offering for sin for our transgression
 - b. Suffered... for us...
 - c. Sin (offering) for us...
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- a. He had done... no violence... nor deceit
 - b. Who did no sin...
 - c. Who knew... no sin...

In all these references the writers were referring to personal sins only and they teach that Christ was free from such transgressions. There is no mention anywhere in the Scriptures of any atonement for physical-sin-offering, and these three writers agree in showing that Christ was put to death as a sacrifice for something of which He was quite free Himself.

I submit that this method of comparing obscure Scripture with plain Scripture is the only safe and correct method of attaining to an understanding of it.

In the mercy of God we who circulate these articles have been freed from a grave error which we tenaciously held for years, amazed now that we should have so firmly held to a doctrine which is nowhere to be found in the words of God. We therefore appeal to you, with confidence, to search the Scriptures for yourself concerning this matter.

A.H.Broughton.