

Numbers 25: The Plague of Lust

By
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“Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.’” So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.” And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. “Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ‘and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’”

-Numbers 25:1-13

As we continue to study the book of Numbers we see that the roller coaster type narrative continues. It seems for every positive passage, we have a corresponding negative one. After seeing Balaam stand up to the greed and corruption of the king of Moab and see a glimpse of the future ministry of Christ, now we are back to seeing another failure for Israel. And, most unfortunately, the Israelites' fall is not self-inflicted, but they succumbed to a temptation orchestrated by the very man who blessed them in the previous chapter, Balaam.

But within this story we get to see an interesting relationship between seduction and temptation, the nature of spiritual adultery and the radical way that we have to purge sin

from our life. But before we dive into all that, I wanted to say a quick word about Balaam.

The Fall of Balaam

“Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.”

-Numbers 31:16

The most interesting thing about Balaam in our Bibles is that Balaam is forever known as the guy who sold out his principles as a prophet for wealth and power, and yet his fall from glory happens “off screen”. In the narrative of the story, we only see Balaam’s success. How he heads out for his journey, tempted by his ambition, but how he ultimately heeds God’s warning, told through his donkey, and submitted to the will of God, resisted the temptations of Balak, and became a humble vessel for some fairly amazing prophecies from God.

And yet, his fall is not recorded for us. If we simply read the account of Numbers 25 we would have no idea that Balaam was actually the architect of this national disaster. All we are given is the brief verse in Numbers 31 that I have put above. As such we are given no indication as to why Balaam fell, what the temptation was that overcame him, or even how long it was between his success in Numbers 24 and his outright rebellion against God in Numbers 25.

In this way Balaam becomes a mirror image for Jonah. Balaam’s story is a faithful journey that ends before we see him mess up. Jonah’s story is one in which he is faithless throughout the story, and it ends without him repenting. And yet Jonah is remembered as a faithful prophet, which intimates that he repented “off screen”, and Balaam is remembered as a faithless prophet.

From this event I wanted to emphasize a simple but profound lesson, the importance of endurance in the Christian life.

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

-Colossians 1:21-23

It is this virtue of endurance and constancy that is all but forgotten in our modern world that is so necessary for us to understand and remember. As an old mountain climber once said when teaching people principles of his craft: "You can get it right a thousand times, but you only need to get it wrong once to cost you your life." It would be nice if the adversary of our souls was lazy or incompetent, but unfortunately he is neither of those things. We are told after Christ endured the temptations of Satan in the wilderness:

"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."

-Luke 4:13

Satan doesn't give up, he merely retreats and waits for a more opportune time. This is why the Christian is supposed to be on guard and maintain our diligence in the Spirit. This is why Biblical authors speak of spiritual armor:

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..."

-Ephesians 6:11-18

To maintain our integrity before God and the virtue of our souls, we must be diligent, patient, and consistent in our walks with God. We can't be flighty and unstable, but we must be constantly faithful and vigilant in all we do before God. This same lesson is also contained in the fall of the Israelites.

Lust and The Plague

When Phineas purges the sin from Israel by thrusting a javelin through two people, we will talk more about this later, we are told that God had afflicted the nation with a plague as a consequence of their sin. As with all the judgements of God, this is not random but should be seen as a way that God reveals the spiritual consequences of sin through a physical medium.

Part of why God uses this punishment is to show how quickly lust can spread through our conscience. The amazing thing about this story is that, much like with Balaam, the Israelites have actually been doing fairly well. The older generation has passed away and the new generation has been approaching the land and has been winning military victories. Even when they did fall in the incident with the bronze serpent, they were quick to repent and they did trust God's provision that gave them healing.

And yet, seemingly out of nowhere, they have fallen into full blown idolatry as they "court" the Midianite women. Like a plague, the lust of these men has spread throughout the community and has brought them to the point of spiritual death. Lust in itself works much the same way. Whether we are talking about lust for food, money, or sex all it takes is allowing for small thoughts to creep through our conscience before we begin to fantasize, and then from fantasy we might actually begin acting upon our lusts.

Also, like a plague, the idolatry was spread through a "carrier". These women are, essentially, like trojan horses in this conflict. Since Moab and Midian realize they can't defeat Israel in open conflict, and that they can't curse them in a divine sense, they realize that they can "assimilate" them to their ways through their women. These women aren't coming down to the Israelite men because they are interested in them, they were sent with a nefarious purpose. They are spreading their idolatry to the people like a sexually transmitted disease. The sex they are offering these men is not free, but it is intended to spread a particular ideology in order to "convert" the nation of Israel to themselves.

Spiritual Harlotry

"Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel."

-Numbers 25:1-3

We are told in the beginning of this passage that the people of Israel committed harlotry with the women of Moab. This is a strange phrase and one that I believe the translators struggle with. In the context of the story, harlotry isn't really depicted in a literal sense. Meaning that these women aren't literally prostituting themselves to these men, though a dark exchange does occur. Instead, when we see the other verses, it seems as though God is seeing the behavior of His people as a type of spiritual harlotry against Himself.

This theme comes up over and over again in Scripture. It exists primarily in the prophets, with a more notable example in the book of Hosea. The prophet Hosea is told by God to marry a prostitute named Gomer. But she continues to prostitute herself and is perpetually unfaithful to Hosea. God uses this as a sign for what He sees in the nation of Israel:

"Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not my wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts..."

-Hosea 2:1

But why this metaphor of harlotry or adultery? Since God is our Creator, we have a unique, one of a kind relationship with Him. As such, God uses our normal relationships in order to better understand the kind of relationship that He has with us. Sometimes God refers to Himself as our Creator, our King, our Lord, our Savior, our Friend, our Healer, our Father, and, most often, as our Husband. God uses this myriad of metaphors because each relationship captures a particular aspect of our relationship with Him.

When He describes Himself as our Husband, He is trying to convey a couple important things. The first is His unity with us. Sure I am unified to my friends and my family members, to a point, but it is only with my wife that I can truly be said to be "one flesh". This phrase is not only significant of the total life unity that we share, but also it signifies the ultimate act of our unity in the act of sex. We see God make this parallel in many passages, but especially in 1 Corinthians 6:

"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

-1 Corinthians 6:15-17

Paul draws a direct parallel between physical intimacy and the spiritual intimacy that we have with God. The spiritual reality that God shares with His people is exemplified and embodied in the act of sex, which is why God guards this act with such severity. But, genuine unity requires genuine exclusivity. In order for my ideas and desires to be unified to another person, I have to limit myself to one other person. If I had two or more people with an equivalent demand on me for true unity, I would be divided and broken, this would be impossible because the opposing demands would be irreconcilable. We see this exact phenomenon take place in the figures in the Bible who do engage in polygamy.

However, God reveals Himself in a similar way to His people. He desires to be truly unified to us. He doesn't want us to merely relate to Him as a friend, but to have the type of intimate exclusivity reserved for a husband and a wife in which we become fully unified to Him. Because of this, God relates spiritual infidelity to adultery and harlotry. Take James 4 as another example:

"You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'?"

-James 4:2-5

When the desires of our heart move us away from God, we behave "like" an unfaithful spouse who is pulled away from their spouse by the affection they have for another person. This is why "harlotry" might be a better word for this. In adultery there might be some genuine affection and care, though this affection and care is misplaced, it might still be there. In harlotry the affection is really just a means for something else. A prostitute doesn't actually care for the person they are sleeping with, they see the affection as a means to their money. In a similar way, if it is our lust moving us away from God, then we aren't really interested in serving the gods of money, sex, or power, we merely want the benefits that they provide for us.

Once we engage in this attitude this cheapens our relationship with God. If a person gets into the habit of "purchasing" affection it can cheapen the nature of love and intimacy to them. Take pornography as a prime example. In a normal, loving relationship, intimacy is what provides the pretext for nudity and vulnerability. It isn't as though nudity is not present anywhere else in the relationship, but in terms of sexual gratification, nudity is a pretext for intimacy. In order to be intimate in our bodies, we

must re-enter the garden of Eden and become “naked and without shame” before our lover.

This is a difficult thing to do. When we genuinely care for another person, we *want* them to desire us, to love us, to be attracted to us. Therefore we are ashamed of our inadequacies and our flaws. We want to cover them because we care about them. It is love and devotion that allow us to be vulnerable without shame. Without these things we are too held captive by our insecurities to be able to enjoy the passions of intimacy.

But in pornography this is subverted. The women and men who make pornographic material undress before complete strangers in what appears to be “naked and without shame”. But this isn’t the innocent nudity of Adam and Eve, or the faithful nudity that is contained in love and trust, this is a type of shameless nudity that doesn’t actually care for the person they are undressing for. This is a transactional act in which the viewer is able to consume the body of another person in exchange for their money and/or attention. But once this transactional mentality begins to color our imaginations and fantasies, it is difficult to recapture the true purpose of intimacy and its accompanying vulnerability. It is far simpler to treat our spouse in a similarly transactional manner and pollute the virtue of our own marital beds.

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

-Hebrews 13:4-5

This is why Solomon’s mother warned him about his sexual proclivities:

“Do not give your strength to women, Nor your ways to that which destroys kings.”

-Proverbs 31:3

Giving his strength to women would destroy his capacity to be a just king. One who doesn't know how to treat their spouse with respect can't know how to treat their subjects with respect and dignity. By multiplying wives like products, Solomon had cheapened his sex life and become a hardened person who was open to idolatry.

Here is a key difference between the God of Israel and the gods of the pagans. We see this even with Balaam, the pagan gods *could* be bought off. They didn’t love their people, they had a loyalty to their people and cared for them, but they ultimately cared only for their own glory and purposes. As such, for the right price, the gods could be swayed to do whatever the worshipper desired. So when Balak sets up the altars to

God in the previous chapters, he assumes this was the price of God's cursing power. He never anticipated the God of Balaam to be one of supreme integrity, a God who genuinely loved His people and was devoted to them.

When we give into this transactional thinking though we can treat God with this same type of devotion, believing that our service to Him somehow buys off His blessing. And when we don't receive what we like from God, we feel as though He is in some way not living up to His end of the bargain and that we are entitled to go elsewhere.

Temptation and Seduction

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 'with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.'"

-Revelation 17:1-2

Picking up on this point, the other reason why the Bible relates harlotry to our spiritual unfaithfulness is because there is a parallel between how temptation and seduction work. In the above passage, the kingdom of the antichrist has a city of immense wealth and prosperity that "seduces" the nations into worshipping the beast. John sees this city in the form of a gaudy prostitute that tempts the nations towards intimacy with her. We have already gone over a lot of the symbolism behind this, but let's focus on another more simple symbol, seduction. I like how Gregory of Nyssa talks about this story:

"It seems to me that the story proposes to men a useful teaching to the soul. Through it we learn that, many passions being opposed to man's reason, no other passion has so much power against us that it can equal the sickness of pleasure. For the fact that those Israelites, who together had shown themselves to be stronger than the Egyptian cavalry, had overcome the Amalekites, had seemed fearful before the people who were their neighbors and after these things had overcome the phalanx of the Madianites, had fallen into the slavery of passion when they saw the foreign women, shows well - as we have said - that voluptuousness is for us a difficult enemy to fight and to overcome."

-Gregory of Nyssa - "The Life of Moses"

The temptation to any sin is almost always *through* the passions. The reason why Satan does this is because sin is never truly rational. While sin is pleasurable and enjoyable, it is never really fulfilling. As such, in order to "fall" for temptation we have to be seduced by it through a type of deception:

“...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...”

-Ephesians 4:22

What does it mean that our lusts are deceptive? Obviously they do give us the pleasure that they promise, but always at a cost and never what we really expected. Take the image of the prostitute as a prime example of this. She has a facade of glory and luxury, but a prostitute is notably dirty and is little more than a slave to whoever would purchase her. This is why, even though ancient cultures had male and female prostitutes, just like ours, the symbol of the prostitute in the Bible is always female. Why?

Partly because this is a parody of Christ's faithful bride, the church, but mostly because of the unique seduction that women can perform on men. Take a prime example of this:

“For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, And saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, A young man devoid of understanding, Passing along the street near her corner; And he took the path to her house In the twilight, in the evening, In the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, With the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, Her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, Lurking at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him; With an impudent face she said to him: “I have peace offerings with me; Today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, Diligently to seek your face, And I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, Colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; He has gone on a long journey; He has taken a bag of money with him, And will come home on the appointed day.” With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him.”

-Proverbs 7:6-21

Although a man could do something similar, this is a particularly feminine seduction. Notice how she approaches him with “brazenness”. If a man were this forthcoming in their seduction it would be more scary than sexy. For a woman to be this forthcoming it is telling the man that he doesn't have to work to attract this woman. She is already infatuated with him and would do anything for him. She then tempts him with numerous images and allusions to sensual pleasure until he succumbs to her seduction. However, almost everything about this scene is a lie.

She isn't actually attracted to this man, she merely wants his money. She doesn't love him, she almost certainly has not made any religious vows and is most likely not married. She wants to consume this man, and so she lies to bring him to bed.

This is the same with these Moabite women. They aren't really attracted to the Israelite men, they are using them to spread devotion to their foreign gods. It is interesting, in a Christian fable known as "The Cave of Treasures", Christians from the mideast kept a tradition that "expanded" on the text of Scripture. It is important to note that they did not believe that these accounts actually happened, it was more or less written to give a perspective on how these events may have happened, kind of similar to the modern show "The Chosen".

In one section they depict the event that led to the Nephilim in Genesis 6, right before the flood. In this version of events, the "sons of God" mentioned in Genesis 6 are shown to be the faithful sons of Seth, and the "daughters of men" or the faithless daughters of Cain. These women had engaged in illicit demonic rituals and were said to be possessed by these demonic entities. They then seduce the sons of Seth in an account that mirrors the story from Numbers 25:

"And when they saw that the daughters of Cain were beautiful in form and that they were naked and unashamed, the children of Seth became inflamed with the fire of lust. And when the daughters of Cain saw the goodness of the children of Seth, they gripped them like ravaging beasts and defiled their bodies. And the children of Seth slew their souls by fornication with the daughters of Cain."

-The Cave of Treasures

Notice the false sense of attraction, the inversion of "naked and unashamed", and how the sons of Seth act as "ravaging beasts". In other words, in the grips of passion they forgot their rationality, and in many ways, their humanity. Any person who doesn't understand the power of their passions. How these passions can take them captive, and even delude them into thinking that their actions are good when they are really bad, and how these passions can be vessels for demonic influence, they haven't paid enough attention to their own soul.

For me, the temptations of lust and wrath are particularly potent. When I am in the grips of these passions I forget my faithfulness to God and I can wander in my thoughts and my imaginations. And especially in my wrath, I can be deeply influenced by my passions and even speak and act out of them. Once again, because these temptations are so powerful we have to be ever vigilant against the power of seduction in our own souls.

Unequally Yoked

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

-2 Corinthians 6:14

I will only mention this point briefly, because it really isn't the point of this text. Another lesson we can draw from this text is the danger of being “unequally yoked”. The reason why God told His people not to intermarry with foreign nations is because, to be married is to be fully unified with another person towards a common ultimate purpose.

In marriage we see that it isn't enough to merely have common interests, we have to be unified in the deepest, most intimate parts of our lives. The reason for this is simple. In marriage a couple has to make life altering decisions in harmony with one another. If a couple is guided by fundamentally differing world views, these views will come in conflict and cause the relationship to fragment. The only way for the conflict to be solved is for one person to sacrifice their own beliefs in order to appease the other.

In the story of the Moabites, these women were sent to specifically subvert the morality of the Israelites, and so they were certainly not going to compromise on their beliefs. But in most relationships this compromise tends to be mutual. Meaning that both parties end up adopting some of the beliefs of their partner to achieve some level of harmony within the relationship. The result is almost always bad for both parties. Remember that the Israeli men are said to be committing “harlotry” because they don't actually believe what these women are saying, they are merely enamored by them.

In the same way, in couples who are unequally yoked, this false harmony is founded on a hypocritical compromise that occurs within the individual. For the Christian this means that we will be pulled away from our fidelity towards God, and for the other person it means that they might give lip service to God, but this will never actually touch their soul.

This is why Paul uses the metaphor of “yokes”. A yoke was a type of harness used to join two beasts of burden, usually oxen, together so they could pull a particularly heavy load. What Paul is saying is that life is a series of responsibilities and burdens that we are called to uphold. A couple can't function if their burdens have no harmony with one another. The idea of being “unequally yoked” in Paul's day would be taking two animals with fundamentally different natures, like an ox and a horse, and trying to yoke them together to get a job done. The result would be that both animals would be harmed and the job would be undone. While this is an unpopular view today, the warning is clear and

obvious, part of subjecting our sexuality to God is seeking a spouse who shares our desire to honor God.

The Purging of Sin

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.’ So Moses said to the judges of Israel, ‘Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.’ And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ‘Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ‘and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’ ”

-Numbers 25:4-9

The end of this passage is pretty radical. The guilty men are executed, and a man named Phinehas publicly executes a couple by driving a javelin through them. There is a little ambiguity in this story, but when it says that a Hebrew man was “presenting” a Moabite woman in the “tent”, there is some vagueness as to what was going on. The most salacious interpretation, which I happen to agree with, is that this man was acting out a pagan sexual ritual with this woman in the Tabernacle of God.

The reason why this seems to be the case is that he is able to pin them at the same time, which would intimate that they were having sex, or at the very least locked in an embrace, but also that we are made known that Phinehas was a priest when he is rewarded after this. Gregory of Nyssa made this comment about this story:

“But the zealous Phinehas did not wait for the sin to be purified by a decision from above, but he himself became a judge and executioner. Filling with wrath against those who had let themselves be carried away by the Passion, he made himself priest by purifying sin with blood: not with the blood of some innocent animal, who had no part in

the filth of intemperance, but with those who had united themselves in sin. His spear stopped the movement of divine justice by going through the bodies of the two in one stroke, mixing with death the pleasure of sinners.”

-Gregory of Nyssa - “The Life of Moses”

But this leads to the final point I wanted to make on this passage. Since lust can act as a plague in our souls, stealing our strength and causing spiritual compromise and death, in order to get sin out of our lives we need to be radical in our attempts to purge it from us.

“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

-Matthew 5:29-30

When Christ tells us to cut off our hand or to pluck out our eye, He is very clearly speaking within this metaphor of plague or infection. If a part of our body is infected, it might be necessary to purge it from us lest the infection spreads and kills us. Christ is clear here that because the draw of sin is so powerful, it can actually bring us to hell and therefore we have to take radical steps to maintain our integrity. This can be sacrificing relationships, giving up certain privileges, or substances. For myself, I have made it a point to keep a filter on my computer and my phone. I know the power of lust in my heart and I know the compromises I am tempted to make. Therefore I have made a step to help maintain my integrity before God and my wife.

But, in an ultimate sense, this is what Christ came to do. In order to stop the plague of sin that was wiping out the nation, blood had to be spilled. This is exactly what Christ did for us. Instead of shedding our blood though, Christ chose to shed His own. He was treated as a sinner and through His sacrifice we are made whole and purged of the destructive nature of our own sin.

“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed

and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked— But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.”

-Isaiah 53:3-11