

# God's Glorious Purpose Represented in Symbols (Examples)



## SABBATH—JANUARY 1

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Genesis 4:1-8; Genesis 22:1-19; Numbers 21:4-9.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' The two of them walked on together" (Genesis 22:8, NlrV).

**MOST CHRISTIANS UNDERSTAND THAT SALVATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THROUGH JESUS' DEATH.** The people in heaven will be there because they had faith in what Jesus did for them on the cross.

There are many symbols of Jesus' death in the Old Testament. The symbols we will study this week are two sacrifices, a lamb and a brazen (bronze) serpent (snake). These symbols are almost the same as shadows. If there were no light, there would be no shadows. Shadows help us understand the light. Jesus is the Light. The symbols are the shadows. The symbols help us understand what Jesus did for us on the cross.

As you study about Jesus' death on the cross through symbols, ask yourself how these symbols are helping you to understand what He (Jesus) has done for you.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** What words does the Bible use to describe sin? How was the Cross shown in the story of Cain and Abel, in Abraham at Moriah, and in the fiery serpents in the wilderness? What do these stories teach us about the gospel?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 8.

## SUNDAY—JANUARY 2

### THE SIN CRISIS—PART 1 (Leviticus 5:5; John 19:11).

The Bible uses different words to describe sin. Below are the most common words for sin. Study the meaning of each word. Read the verses where each word is found. (Use one of the following translations if you have them: the NIV, New International Version; the TEV, Today's English Version; or the NKJV, New King James Version.)

#### Old Testament

1. *Hattat* is “to miss the mark,” “to miss a target” (Leviticus 5:5; Psalm 51:4).



*Hattat* is a word for sin that means to “miss a target.”

2. *Awon* is translated “iniquity [sin],” with the basic ideas of crookedness, falsehood, or a twisting of the truth (Genesis 15:16; Isaiah 43:24).

3. *Pesha* means the stubborn disobedience of someone with author-

ity. *Pesha* is rebellion against God and is sometimes translated as “transgression [backsliding]” (Isaiah 1:2; Amos 4:4).

4. *Resha* means “out of joint,” to “be loose.” *Resha* suggests the idea of wickedness (Genesis 18:23; Exodus 23:1, 2).

#### New Testament

1. *Hamartia* means to “miss the mark” and is used in the New Testament to denote a decision to rebel against God (John 19:11; 1 John 1:8).

2. *Parokoe* means a “failure to hear” or an “unwillingness to hear.” *Parokoe* is often translated as “disobedience” (Romans 5:19; Hebrews 2:2).

3. *Paraptoma* usually means “a slip,” “a fault,” “a falling down.” Commonly translated as “trespass,” or “transgression” (Matthew 6:14; Romans 4:25).

4. *Anomia* suggests breaking the *nomos* (the law). *Anomia* is the word from which “transgression of the law” is translated in 1 John 3:4 (Matthew 7:23; Hebrews 1:9).

5. *Adikia* carries the idea of “unrighteousness (unholiness)” (Romans 1:18; 2 Peter 2:15).

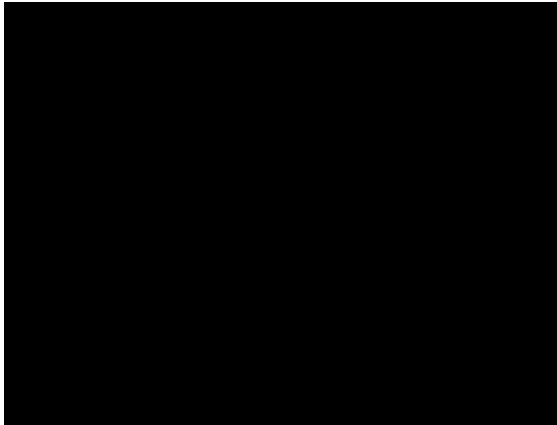
**“To miss the mark,” “a twisting,” “a failure to hear,” “rebellion.” There are so many different words and ideas suggesting sin. What this says is that sin can be shown in different ways. We can sin for different reasons. Write a**

**short paragraph explaining what lessons you have learned about sin from this word study.**

### MONDAY—JANUARY 3

#### THE SIN CRISIS—PART 2 (1 John 5:19).

As sinners, we cannot fully understand how great sin is. Trying to understand sin is the same as trying to look at a blackboard in a dark room. We cannot fully understand sin, but we can still understand enough about sin to know how terrible it is.



A blackboard in a dark room!

**Think of three people you love. Write down what sin has brought to their lives.**

Did you write about sickness, death, crime, violence, pain, separa-

tion, hate, bitterness, et cetera? Now multiply all that by every human being who has ever lived or will ever live. We can only begin to understand how sin destroys people.

How sin destroys people physically is only part of the problem. Sin is rebelling against God. Sin is refusing to accept His authority in your life and actions. Sin is shown in different moral<sup>1</sup> and spiritual actions that lead to suffering and death.

We must understand sin as it relates to our relationship with God. We must see sin as a condition of life. Sinful acts result from the condition of sin we live in. Sin is what we do. Sin is also who we are. We sin because we are sinful.

**When we begin to understand what it takes to save us from sin, we can begin to understand how terrible sin is. What do the following verses tell us about how bad sin is? Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.**

### TUESDAY—JANUARY 4

#### CAIN AND ABEL (Genesis 4:1-8).

For the past two days, we have looked at the sin problem. Today we will begin studying about the cure for sin.

Adam and Eve fell into sin, and the Lord drove them out of the

<sup>1</sup>moral—having to do with knowing what is right or wrong.

Garden of Eden. Afterward, they stayed in touch with Him through worship. Worship helped them look to the promised Savior. The promised Savior would bring an end to the sin problem. Their worship included sacrifices. The Bible does not explain the sacrifices Adam and Eve did. But it is clear from the sacrifices of their first sons, Cain and Abel, that the sacrifice of the lamb was central to their worship. The sacrifice was a symbol (example) of their repentance<sup>2</sup> and faith in the coming Savior. The lamb was a symbol of the Savior.

**What attitudes<sup>3</sup> did Cain have that made him refuse to offer the lamb sacrifice? Genesis 4:1-8; 1 John 3:11-15.**

The story of Cain and Abel is an example of the sharp difference between people who accept Jesus' salvation by faith and people who try to earn salvation with "good works." But people who do not agree with salvation by faith in Jesus alone, without the works of the law (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:11), often say that teaching salvation by faith in Jesus alone leads to sin. They argue that if good works cannot save us, why should we do good things (Romans 6:1, 15)?



Cain tried to earn salvation with his "good works."

**How is Cain's sacrifice different from Abel's sacrifice? Genesis 4:3-7; 1 John 3:12. What were Cain's works as shown in the Bible? Why does the Bible describe his works that way? What do Genesis 4:3-7 and 1 John 3:12 tell us about trying to earn salvation with good works?**

Cain's works were judged evil, because he was trying to earn salvation with them. But Abel did what he did because he understood why he needed to sacrifice a lamb. The lamb was a symbol for Jesus. For these reasons, God judged Abel's works as righteous (holy). Only people who fully depend on Jesus for salvation can do good works, because Jesus lives in their hearts.

<sup>2</sup>repentance—being sorry for your sins, wanting to stop sinning, and turning away from your sins.

<sup>3</sup>attitudes—how people feel about ideas and things.

Works coming from a thankful heart for the gift of salvation are judged to be righteous.

**WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 5**

**ABRAHAM AND CALVARY  
(Genesis 22:1-19; Galatians 3:8).**

One of the most heart-touching and powerful stories in the Bible is the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. For different reasons, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity love this story. Christians see in this story a symbol (example) of the plan of salvation, in which Jesus died for our sins.

**Read Genesis 22:1-19. What other lessons can you learn from this story that could be of value in knowing Jesus?**

We can learn many powerful, spiritual truths from this story. But the gospel part (the lamb as the sacrifice instead of Isaac) is the most important truth. God is telling us in this story that even a human act of total self-sacrifice was not enough to “pay” for sin. The problem of sin is too great for any of us to be able to solve it. Only God could solve the problem of sin. Only He could give the needed Lamb (Jesus).

**How is the gospel shown in Genesis 22:8? Do you think Abraham fully understood what he was saying? Or was he just trying to calm his son?**

Galatians 3:7-9 says the gospel was preached to Abraham. It also says that in Abraham's descendants (future children) all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Abraham maybe understood the plan of salvation before God asked him to sacrifice Isaac. But he surely understood the plan of salvation after a lamb took Isaac's place.

**Abraham's obedience (works) could not save him. But in what ways did his obedience show his faith? What can we learn from Abraham about the relationship between faith and works?**

**THURSDAY—JANUARY 6**

**THE SERPENT (SNAKE) IN THE WILDERNESS (Numbers 21:4-9).**

During Israel's long travels and stay in the wilderness, God protected them from fiery serpents and scorpions<sup>4</sup> (Deuteronomy 8:15). He guarded their health and strength. He gave them water and plenty of good food.

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<sup>4</sup>scorpions—small animals belonging to the same group as spiders belong to. Scorpions have a small stinger in their tail.

He guided them on their journey. He protected them from unfriendly groups of people. But still, the people of Israel complained. While their feet were moving slowly toward the Promised Land, their hearts were moving toward sin and destruction.

**Some of Israel's complaints against Moses seemed good. But were they really good (Numbers 21:5)? Food and water are necessary for life. So why did God allow the serpents to come?**

The people were to look at a copy of a serpent so they could live. Ellen White says the serpent "was a symbol of Jesus. So when the Israelites looked at the serpent, the need to have faith in His merits (goodness) was placed in their minds." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 430. Jesus' own words in John 3:14, 15 give the same idea. But the Bible often uses a serpent as a symbol (example) for evil (Genesis 3:1; Revelation 20:2). So why would the Bible use a symbol for evil to show Jesus?

Some people say the answer is found in the nature of Jesus' death. At the Cross, He was our Sin-Bearer (carrier). He accepted the sin and evil of the world. He became sin and a curse for us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13). Because of His death in our place, we can look and find salvation from the sin that could destroy us. This is one of the

great puzzles of the Christian faith. Jesus is all goodness. But on the cross He became the focus of all evil. So the symbol of the serpent is a symbol for Jesus, the One who accepted all the world's evil.

**Imagine that you are an Israelite who just got bitten by a deadly snake. The snake has already killed other people. You are told that the only way to live is to look at a copy of the snake. Why is this story such a good example of what it means to trust in what you do not fully understand? Why is this story a good example of what it means to accept the fact that you cannot save yourself?**



FRIDAY—JANUARY 7

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 422–432.

"Nothing but the righteousness (holy life) of Jesus can give us the blessings of grace. . . . We must not think that our own goodness can save us. Jesus is our only hope of

salvation. 'God has given us no other name under heaven that will save us.' Acts 4:12, NIV.—Adapted from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.

"Cain and Abel show two groups of people who will be in the world to the close of time. One group believes in the true sacrifice for sin. Jesus is that sacrifice. The other group depends upon their own good works to save them. But without Jesus, their goodness is not able to save them. It is only through the value of Jesus' good works that God can forgive our sins."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Conflict [Trouble] and Courage*, p. 25.

"The same lesson that Jesus commanded Moses to give to the children of Israel in the wilderness is for all people suffering under sin. Jesus told Moses to make a brazen (bronze) serpent (snake) and put it upon a pole. Then Moses was to command all people who were bitten by the fiery serpents to look at the brazen serpent and live. What if these people had said, 'I do not believe it will do any good to look at

the serpent. I am suffering too much from the bites of the poisonous serpents'? We have so much to gain from complete obedience. We should not stop to ask why we should obey God before we decide to obey Him. Jesus said, 'Look [at Me] and live.' "—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 20.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do we understand the difference between the results of sin and sin itself?
2. How do the stories of Cain and Abel, Moses and Isaac, and the bronze serpent help us understand that salvation has always been by faith in Jesus alone? Why does salvation have to depend on only what Jesus has done for us?
3. Look at the last two sentences in the last Ellen White quote above. What do these sentences teach us? Why is learning what these sentences mean so important?