

God the Substitute

I. God promised that he would provide a substitute for us and foreshadowed that *he* would be the substitute

- Gen 22:8: “Abraham said, ‘God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’”
- Gen 15:
 - To assure Abraham that he would receive the promise, God made a covenant.
 - Abraham cut animals in half. Normally, both parties walk through the pieces, which means they both are saying, “May I be like these dead, cut-up animals if I break my part of the covenant” (Jer 34:18).
 - But instead, God made Abraham sleep and he himself passed through the pieces alone. He alone would take the consequences for covenant-breaking; the covenant relies entirely on him.
- Exod 17:1–7
 - The people grumble because they lack water; God says that *he* will stand before Moses on the rock; Moses strikes the rock and water flows.
 - God subjects *himself* to Moses’ staff (the instrument of judgment against Egypt).
 - A foreshadowing of the Roman spear striking Jesus’ side, and *water* and blood flow forth (John 19:34).
- 1 Sam 4:1–11
 - The people sin and lose in battle to the Philistines. Instead of repenting, they treat God’s ark like a magic talisman and go to battle again and lose even worse.
 - But God reserves the ultimate punishment for himself: he himself (represented by the ark) goes into exile to Philistia. The ark defeats Dagon, plagues the Philistines and then returns laden with spoil (gold) to Israel. God wins single-handedly by enduring exile for his people.
- Isa 52:13–53:12
 - God says the servant is “high and lifted up” (Isa 52:13). But this is language reserved for God himself: Isa 6:1; 57:15. The servant is thus identified with God, who does not share his glory with any other (Isa 42:8).
 - But the servant is the one who dies on behalf of his people and bears their iniquities.

II. God came in the flesh to be our substitute

- Jesus is God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14; Col 2:9).
- Although he did nothing to deserve death (Acts 13:28; Heb 7:26), he nevertheless died the death we deserved as our substitute (Heb 2:9; 7:27).
- Jesus is the great passover lamb (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7)
- Although he was guiltless, God has assumed to himself the great curses of the covenant that we deserved (Gal 3:13; cf. Rom 5:8; 8:32).

III. Applications

- We must not doubt God’s love (Rom 8:32). We should lay down our lives for others like God did for us (John 15:13).