

## DID JESUS OFFER HIS SACRIFICE FIRST FOR HIMSELF?

### THE QUESTION OF MARY'S TRANSFERRING OF SINFUL FLESH TO JESUS DOES NOT ARISE

From the previous study the teaching that mankind has sinful flesh was seen to have no basis in the Scriptures. From this it is clear that Mary the mother of Jesus did not literally have sinful flesh and so there is no problem to resolve concerning the birth of Jesus as regards any transferring of a so-called sin nature to him.

Firstly, this study confirms the conclusions from the previous study by examining the various statements about the sinlessness of Jesus and about his sacrifice and then it aims to demonstrate that, although fully human and mortal, Jesus did not come under the judicial death penalty brought about by Adam's sin—he was not “in Adam.” So when Jesus offered his sacrifice to God the offering was on behalf of mankind that were “in Adam” and not on behalf of himself. Because Jesus was “the only begotten Son of God” and was the exact equal of the pre-transgression Adam he was the only one who could have freed mankind from the death-penalty incurred by Adam for his offspring.

### HOW COULD MARY HAVE A PHYSICALLY FLAWLESS SON?

Is it possible that Jesus was absolutely no different to any other human? After all God's “...*Son... was descended from David according to the flesh (mortal humanity)*” (Rom. 1:3). Certainly, Mary was descended from David and obviously from Adam and so Jesus was indeed mortal. However, the difference was that, Jesus, from birth, was the “only-begotten Son of God”—a new creation not born from man's will. He did not have two fathers and the specially chosen Mary, as with all other humans, did not have sinful flesh and therefore did not pass on to Jesus anything but the genetics contained in her egg. So her genetic contribution would not have placed Jesus' genetic perfection in jeopardy, that is, it could not negatively affect the newly conceived child.

### JESUS WAS MORTAL BUT SUBJECT TO THE SINLESS INFIRMITIES OF MAN'S MORTAL NATURE

The fact that Jesus was mortal is implied by Paul when he told the Romans that: “*Death no longer has dominion over him [Jesus]*” (Rom. 6:9). This statement proves that Jesus had been mortal and subject to death and that if he had not been executed **he would normally have eventually died** just as all mortals are genetically programmed to die (although Jesus had the right to the tree of life just as the pre-transgression Adam did). His previous mortality is confirmed in the words: “*For though he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by the power of God*” (2 Cor. 13:4). The phrase “in weakness” is a reference to Jesus' mortality (1 Cor. 15:43) but not to any weakness of human character. This was because Jesus resisted sin throughout his life; whereas the Mosaic Law failed because of the weak human character of the Israelites. Nevertheless, God achieved salvation for them because “His own *Son*” did not have any such weaknesses of the unspiritual character but only the limitations of his mortal body. Jesus is shown to have become hungry, thirsty, in need of sleep, emotional, capable of being tempted, and he suffered and finally died:

- ❖ “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with *our weaknesses*, but was *in all points tempted as we are*, yet *without sin*” (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus therefore had man's mortal nature as did the pre-transgressing Adam. Jesus can therefore

sympathize with our weaknesses as mortals and he now intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34). Although sin dominates human life, it is not an intrinsic part of our bodies. We are not tempted because of a supposed predisposition to sin just as both the pristine Adam and Jesus were not tempted because of any such predisposition. However, Jesus was not incapable of sinning.

#### *JESUS HAD NO ADVANTAGE OVER US WHEN TEMPTED*

❖ “Therefore he had to be **made like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has **suffered when tempted**, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (*Heb. 2:17, 18 ESV*).

Nevertheless, Jesus' being “*made like his brothers in every respect*” does not mean that he was a mere man. He was “*the only begotten Son*” and was “*holy*” and perfect as was the perfect Adam. Also Hebrews 4:15 above shows that Jesus was “*in all points tempted as we are.*” Yet being perfect does not necessarily mean that temptation is any easier to deal with as proven in Adam's case.

#### JESUS BECAME BEHAVIOURALLY FLAWLESS AS HE GREW UP AND CONDUCTED HIS MINISTRY

The Scriptures show that Jesus never sinned (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22) and the definition of sin is: transgression of a law. Yet Jesus wasn't born with complete wisdom or the ability to be perfectly obedient or with full experience of life. He applied himself to these things as he grew into adulthood:

- ❖ “The child continued to grow and become strong, *increasing in* (Lit. *becoming full of*) **wisdom...**” (*Luke 2:40*).
- ❖ “...though he was a Son, yet he **learned obedience** by the things which he suffered. And *having been perfected*, He became the author of eternal salvation” (*Heb. 5:8, 9*).
- ❖ “...the Son who *has been* **perfected** forever” (*Heb. 7:28b*).
- ❖ “...in bringing many sons to glory, **to make** the captain of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**” (*Heb. 2:10*).

Although Jesus was capable of being tempted he was free from Adamic condemnation by virtue of being God's son. Furthermore, unlike all other humans, he did not need to be reconciled with his Father.

#### WHAT MADE JESUS DIFFERENT TO THE REST OF HUMANITY?

- *HE IS THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD*
  - ❖ “For God so loved the world, that He gave **His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him **shall not perish**, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be **saved through Him**” (*John 3:16*).

*The phrase “His only begotten Son” is more easily understood as ‘His uniquely generated or produced Son.’ So in this sense Jesus was different from the rest of mankind.*

- *NOT AN ADOPTED SON*

Christians are adopted sons of God. In contrast, Jesus was not an adopted son of God, but was directly God's Son—being “the only begotten Son of God.

- *HE IS THE HOLY ONE—THE SON OF GOD*
  - ❖ “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will **overshadow** you; therefore, that **Holy One** who is to be born will be called **the Son of God**” (*Luke 1:35*).
- *HE IS “THE LAMB WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD” (John 1:29).*
- *HE IS THE LAST ADAM and “ became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45).*

God does not create imperfect creatures. So Adam was created perfect and the Last Adam must also have been brought into existence perfect. The perfect Adam, whilst obedient, was a type of the perfect and obedient Jesus because: “...*death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of Adam, who is **a type of him** who was to come*” (*Rom. 5:14*). So for Jesus to be the redeeming sacrifice he would have to offer himself with what Adam lost i.e. his perfect relationship with his creator and so he would need to be sinless in every respect. Hence from a position of perfection, Adam, by disobedience brought sin into the life of mankind. Correspondingly from a position of perfection and obedience Jesus, as the Adam antitype, removed sin from mankind who believe.

#### SACRIFICES UNDER THE LAW WERE TO BE PERFECT i.e. WITHOUT BLEMISH

- ❖ “Whatever **has a defect**, you shall **not offer**, for it will not be accepted for you. When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfil a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, **it must be perfect** to be accepted; there shall be **no defect in it**” (*Lev. 22:20, 21*).
- ❖ “You shall consecrate to the LORD your God all the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock; you shall not work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. <sup>21</sup>But if it has **any defect**, such as lameness or blindness, or **any serious defect**, you shall **not sacrifice it** to the LORD your God” (*Deut. 15:19, 21*).

Under the Mosaic Law the sins of the people were imputed to the animal chosen for sacrifice. However, these animal sacrifices were only types of the one sacrifice of a perfect human life that would be the actual payment for sin. They were accepted in forbearance by God until time came for the true sacrifice in payment of the deferred death sentence. The “life for a life” principle applied to Jesus’ giving of his life for Adam’s and all who were in Adam’s loins. It was therefore “a ransom for many.” Yet God’s condemnation of those who brought animals that were blemished is seen in God’s words through Malachi:

- ❖ “But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been **taken by violence** or is **lame or sick**, and this you bring *as your offering!* Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. ***Cursed be the cheat*** who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet **sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished**” (*Mal. 1:13, 14*).

On this basis God Himself is hardly going to accept Jesus’ sacrifice as “the lamb of God” if Jesus himself had not been physically unblemished – perfect.

#### JESUS’ SACRIFICIAL BODY WAS PERFECT

- ❖ “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But **a body You have prepared for Me**. In burnt offerings and *sacrifices for sin* You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God’” Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said,

“Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been **sanctified** through the offering of **the body** of Jesus Christ once for all” (*Heb. 10:5-10*).

*Evidently God did not prepare a body that was less than “very good” (Gen.1:31) and certainly not one that was composed of ‘sinful flesh.’ So for Christians to be “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” there would have to be a clean and unblemished body.*

- ❖ “knowing that you were **not redeemed with corruptible things**, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb **without blemish and without spot**” (*1 Pet. 2:18, 19*).

#### *JESUS WAS NOT JUST BEHAVIOURLY FLAWLESS*

As shown earlier Mary did not transmit any so-called sinful flesh to Jesus and because he was God’s Son rather than Adam’s he did not come under sin as one in Adam’s loins. So he was physically perfect because he was:

- A direct “new Creation” by God.
- Equal to the pre-transgression perfect Adam.
- The perfect Lamb of God with no defects.

#### *NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN JESUS’ CHARACTER AND HIS BODY*

- ❖ “For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, **undefiled, separated from sinners** and exalted above the heavens...” (*Heb. 7:26 NASU*).

*Although Jesus became high priest only after being received into heaven this description concerns his qualities on earth that were required for him to become our high priest, as Peter said: “[Jesus]... committed no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22) and “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God...” (Heb. 9:14). So God’s purpose was:*

- ❖ “...that He was revealed so that He might take away sins, and there is **no sin in Him**” (*1 John 3:5*).

With reference to Jesus, the Scriptures make no distinction between his character and his physical nature as regards sin. He was simply “...**without sin.**” (*Heb. 4:15*). If Jesus’ blood was without blemish then he must have been physically perfect. Only a physically perfect “Lamb of God” could take away “the sin of the world.” So how could Jesus be without blemish if he had sinful flesh? The fact is that Jesus:

- ❖ “...*himself* bore our sins **in his own body** on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness” (*1 Pet. 2:24*).

#### *JESUS’ FLESH IS THE BREAD OF LIFE*

- ❖ ““For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and **gives life to the world.**” <sup>34</sup>They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ ... <sup>48-</sup> ‘I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And **the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh**’” (*John 6:33, 34, 48-51*).

As the bread of life Jesus’ ‘flesh’ could hardly be less than perfect. So the complete Jesus, not just his perfect behaviour, was the perfect sacrifice and he earned immortality by his perfect obedience.

## NO OTHER HUMAN COULD HAVE BEEN THE SACRIFICE TO BRING ABOUT REDEMPTION

### NO ONE 'IN ADAM' COULD BE THE SACRIFICE

- ❖ “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him—for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever” (*Ps. 49:7*).

Only Jesus could redeem mankind from Adam’s sin because he was the only one not in need of redemption. A ransom was required for mankind; yet anyone in need of such a ransom could not actually become that ransom. Only one who was not “in Adam” could be the ransom. Yet the biblical principle of a near relative also came into play:

### A NEAR KINSMAN (*Heb. goel*) NEEDED AS REDEEMER

In Israel no slave could redeem himself. However, the Mosaic Law made provision for a near kinsman who was not in bondage to do this:

- ❖ “If...one of your countrymen becomes poor and *sells himself* to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien’s clan, he retains **the right of redemption** after he has sold himself. **One of his relatives may redeem him**: An uncle or a cousin or **any blood relative** in his clan may redeem him” (*Lev. 25:47-49 NIV*).

*This law was seen in operation in the case of Boaz as near kinsman who redeemed Ruth (Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 13; 4:1-15).*

### JESUS AS THE NEAREST FREE KINSMAN

Because Jesus was born directly from God he was not ‘in Adam’ i.e. he did not derive his life from Adam’s condemned line:

- ❖ “He will be great and will be called **the Son of the Most High**; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David ... <sup>35</sup>The angel answered and said to her, “The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the **power of the Most High** will overshadow you; and *for that reason* the holy Child shall be called **the Son of God**”” (*Luke 1:32-35*).

Because of not having Joseph as his father, Jesus was not under the sin of Adam, but was free. However, he was related to Adam’s race as the nearest kinsman and so: “God sent forth **His Son, born of a woman**, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (*Gal. 4:4, 5*). Therefore Jesus was not in bondage to Adamic sin but could act as redeemer because, unlike all who were ‘in Adam,’ Jesus was “the lamb of God.”

## JESUS SUFFERED THE DEFERRED PENALTY OF ADAM’S SIN

- ❖ “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away **the sin of the world!**”” (*John 1:29*).
- ❖ “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also **for the sins of the whole world** (i.e. from Adam’s sin)” (*1 John 2:2*).
- ❖ These texts are not about Jesus taking away just the personal sins of individuals but of Adam’s sin —“the sin of the world.” Jesus voluntarily suffered the execution of the legal death penalty that Adam, and all who were in Adam’s loins at the time, should have suffered. So Jesus’ sacrifice was to remove the condemnation and to reconcile responsive individuals back to relationship with God—in effect setting them free:

- ❖ “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will **set you free** ... So **if the Son sets you free**, you will be free indeed” (*John 8:32, 36*).

Scripturally, “the truth [that] will **set you free**” is the gospel message which concerns “the good news of the kingdom of God and **the name of Jesus Christ**” (Acts 8:12). In saying “**the name of Jesus Christ**” reference is made to everything about him including his major act in becoming the ransom sacrifice. It is this aspect of “the truth” that sets a person free from the sin of Adam now and reconciles a responsive individual to God thus repairing the broken relationship:

- ❖ “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him **to reconcile to himself** all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace **through his blood**, shed on the cross” (*Col. 1:19, 20 NIV*).

### WHY JESUS, AS HIGH PRIEST, DID NOT NEED TO OFFER A SACRIFICE FOR HIMSELF

Even the sacrificial animals under the Mosaic Law were not sacrificed for their own sins. So a human would never be required to sacrifice himself for his own sins even if they had been inherited. But because Jesus was both *physically* and *behaviourally flawless* he was therefore sinless in both his nature and his character and so had no need to sacrifice for himself. Clearly the sinless human Jesus should not even be thought of in these terms.

#### THE JEWISH HIGH PRIEST HAD TO SACRIFICE FOR HIS PERSONAL SINS

- ❖ “For the law appoints as high priests men who have **weaknesses**” (*Heb. 7:28a*).
- ❖ “...every high priest...is required as for the people, so also **for himself**, to offer sacrifices for sins” (*Heb. 5:1, 3*).
- ❖ “But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he **offered for himself** and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance” (*Heb. 9:7*).

*Such weaknesses of the high priests are not only because of their being mortal and perishable but because of their **not** having **been perfected** forever; whereas: “...the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has **been perfected** forever” (*Heb. 7:28b*).*

### MISUNDERSTANDING OF JESUS’ SERVICE AS HIGH PRIEST

- ❖ “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, **first** for **his own sins** and **then** for the people’s. For **this** (Gk. *touto*, neut, sing) he did once for all when he offered up himself” (*Heb. 7:26, 27*).

*CD argument:* “For **this** he [*Jesus*] did once” has reference to the phrase “**first** for **his own sins** and **then** for the people’s.”

*Comment:*

Although this text is a little ambiguous the passage is not paralleling Jesus with the high priest, but rather it is contrasting the two. The word “this” is referring back to what Jesus did not need to do, namely, “to offer up sacrifices **first** for **His own sins**” because, in being “**without blemish** and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19), **he did not have any sins**.

Note the two phrases in Hebrews 7:26, 27:

1. **first** for **his own sins** and
2. **then** for the people’s.

Because the Greek word *touto*, meaning ‘**this**’ in verse 27 is singular, it grammatically refers only to #2; otherwise the writer would have used ‘**these**’ to refer to ‘these two things’ i.e. both aspects of the sacrificing. Additionally, the fact that the high priests did this daily is either incidental to the writer’s point or shows that the high priests had to be cleansed to be a fitting **type of Jesus as the sinless high priest**. In any case this passage refers to the personal sins of the high priest and does not speak of any so-called *sin-nature*. In his *Commentary on Hebrews* F.F Bruce states that:

There is no explicit command for a daily sin offering to be presented by the high priest on his own account; but inadvertent sinning, could well have been a daily hazard....an inadvertent sin on his part brought guilt on the people.

*JESUS WAS NOT A HIGH PRIEST WHILE ON EARTH*

Hebrews 7:26-28 is expressed by the writer in the present tense after Jesus was already “**exalted above the heavens**.” It does not say ‘he did not need to offer sacrifices daily;’ but rather he “*does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices.*” So the phrase “*for this he did once for all when he offered up himself*” refers, not to his submission to death, but rather to his presenting the value of that sacrificial death to his Father in heaven. This was because Jesus was not in the High priestly position until after he had ascended:

- ❖ “Now **if he were on earth**, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law” (*Heb. 8:4*). Also note Hebrews 7:14-16.

So, for Jesus, while on earth, he was actually the victim—the lamb (John 1:29; Isa 53:7) and not the sacrifice offerer—God (John 3:16; Isa 53:6). Jesus’ actions as high priest came later and there was only one offering made, and that was for our sins.

THE SACRIFICE WAS ONLY FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

The prophecy concerning ‘the suffering servant’ of Isaiah 53 which was later applied to Jesus stated that “*he was wounded for our transgressions*” (vs. 5). Later Joseph was told that Mary would “bear a son...for he will save his people from **their sins**” (Matt. 1:21) and Jesus confirmed that during his ministry by saying:

- ❖ “I am the bread of life ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is **my flesh**, which I will **give for the life of the world**”  
*(John 6:48, 50, 51).*

*Jesus did not say: ‘This bread is my sinful flesh, which I will give first for myself and then for the life of the world.’ He died only for others:*

- ❖ “For while we were still weak, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly**...<sup>\*</sup>...while we were still sinners, Christ **died for us**” (*Rom. 5:6, 8*).

All the relevant biblical phrases show that Jesus: “gave himself for **our sins**” (Gal. 1:4), “came into the world **to save sinners**” (1 Tim. 1:15), “gave himself for us **to redeem us** from all lawlessness” (Titus 2:14), “died for **our sins**,” “died for **our transgressions**,” “gave his life **for the sheep**,” “was delivered for **our transgressions**,” “was sacrificed for **us**,” “tasted death for every man,” and “suffered for us.” Additionally he “gave himself for the church” (Eph. 5:25). Not once do the Scriptures say that Jesus sacrificed himself, or died for, or was delivered up for, or suffered for, or tasted death for **himself**; yet in God’s purpose “He...did not spare his own Son but gave him up **for us all**” (*Rom. 8:32*).

## MISAPPLIED TEXTS

*Hebrews 2:14:*

“Inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in **the same...**”

**CD reasoning:** This text means that Jesus had a fallen, defiled and unholy physical nature?

*Comment:* The phrase “flesh and blood” refers to humans who are naturally mortal. It does not here refer to physical nature or to so-called sinful flesh.

*Romans 6:10-12:*

“For the death that he died he **died to sin** once for all; but the life that he lives he lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves also to be dead to sin...do not let sin reign in your mortal body.”

**CD reasoning:** Is that Jesus must have had a sinful body if he “died to sin.”

*Comment:* Inasmuch as Christ has been resurrected so any temptation to sin no longer has any hold over him and he now lives an immortal, incorruptible life.

*Galatians 3:13:*

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having **become a curse for us** (for it is written, “**Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree**”).”

**CD reasoning:** Is that Jesus was cursed by the Mosaic Law and similarly had to be cursed by the Adamic “law of sin and death” in order to redeem mankind.

*Comment:* Paul, here, has quoted from Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 which concerns a man who had broken the law. It was not the hanging on the tree that actually made the criminal accursed. So Galatians 3:13 really emphasizes the fact of Jesus’ acting as the substitute for mankind i.e. those who were actually under the Adamic curse. In fact, “*no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed*” (1 Cor. 12:3).

*Zechariah 9:9:* “The king cometh unto thee.....**and saving himself.**”

*Comment:* This is found only in the AV margin. It is not found in any translation of the Scriptures.

*Luke 2:22, 24:*

“Now when the days of her (‘**their**’ in most other translations) **purification** according to the Law of Moses were completed, **they** brought him to Jerusalem...and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law...”

**CD reasoning:** It is stated that because the purification was for **them**, Mary and Jesus, that Jesus must have had sinful flesh. However, the actual law refers **only to the mother** who has recently given birth: “**She** shall be unclean for 7 days ... When the days of **her purification** are fulfilled...**she** shall bring the priest a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering ... and make atonement for **her**” (Lev. 12:2, 6, 7).

*Comment:* Nothing is mentioned about purification, making a sin offering or making atonement for the child. Hence the Luke 2:22 situation is no proof of sinful flesh in Jesus. This text is clarified in several versions e.g. NIV gives “*When the time of **their** purification...had been completed, **Joseph and Mary** took him to Jerusalem.*”

*Hebrews 9:12:*

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, **having obtained** eternal redemption.”

**CD reasoning:** The claim is made that the use of the middle voice in the phrase “having obtained” in Hebrews 9:12 indicates that, by his sacrifice, Jesus obtained redemption **for himself** before redeeming mankind. This he had to do because he was naturally inclined towards sin, having inherited literal “sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3, please see STUDY 16) from Adam; and so requiring that he be redeemed.

*Comment:* Dr. John Bechtle, former professor of New Testament Greek at Arizona Bible College explains that:

The short answer is that they [Christadelphians] are grossly overstating their case on the basis of the middle voice. They are correct in saying that “obtained” in Hebrews 9:12 is in the middle voice, but it certainly doesn’t prove their doctrine. The middle voice can be used to communicate a wide range of ideas, and some of those other ideas make much better sense than their interpretation.

I have listed a few of the most common shades of meaning that the middle voice can communicate on my web site, [ezraproject.com/2011.03.01\\_arch.html](http://ezraproject.com/2011.03.01_arch.html). And the major grammar books go into much more detail. Here’s how Dana and Mantey (an old classic) describe the middle:

“We can never hope to express exactly the Greek middle voice by an English translation. . . While the active voice emphasizes the action [itself], the middle stresses the agent [the one doing it]. It, in some way, relates the action more intimately to the subject. Just how the action is thus related is not indicated by the middle voice, but must be detected from the context or the character of the verbal idea.” *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 157.

In other words, the middle voice puts extra emphasis on the subject, but you can only tell *how* it’s emphasizing it by looking at the context and paying attention to the meaning of the verb.

The Christadelphians are assuming that this is what grammarians sometimes call an “indirect middle,” where the subject acts for himself, or in his own interest. That’s a legitimate usage, and it’s reasonably common. But I think it’s what some grammar books call an “intensive middle.” In this common usage, the middle voice is just emphasizing the subject. In English, we might say, “He himself did it.” Or you might underline the subject for emphasis. If you were speaking, you would emphasize the subject. The idea is “He did, not anyone else.” And in Hebrews 9:12, the context clearly supports the idea that it was Christ, not anyone else, who obtained our redemption.

Another example of this usage is in Acts 20:24, where Paul says, “I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself.” “Consider” is in the middle voice, indicating that however others may regard the situation, this is what *he* thinks about it. As Dana and Mantey point out, “The Greeks employed the middle where we must resort to italics” (p. 159).

Here’s a principle that I try to communicate to my students: There are some things in Greek that you can know for sure, because the spelling of the word tells you. But when you go beyond those certainties, you are doing some interpreting. That’s OK, as long as you know there is room for disagreement. You should know what’s possible, based on Greek grammar, then use context and common sense to discern which usage is employed in the verse you’re studying. In this case, you can know for sure that the verb is middle, because that’s how it’s spelled. But you must observe the context and use common sense to discern which of the possible grammatical usages was chosen by the writer.

In the case of the Christadelphians, it seems clear that they came to this passage with their minds already made up. They constructed their theology elsewhere, and brought it to this verse. As a result, they chose one of the less likely alternatives because it seemed congruent with their doctrine.

Furthermore, the general context of Hebrews 9:12 indicates that Jesus obtained/secured **our** redemption/deliverance. So there is nothing in this passage to indicate that Jesus needed redemption first.

### WHY COULD JESUS HAVE HIS LIFE BACK?

If Adam had paid the death penalty directly and immediately he would have perished forever because he was a sinner fit for destruction and for whom there was no basis for him to be resurrected.

No man, under Adam's death penalty "can redeem his brother" (Ps. 49: 7). However, Jesus could redeem us because he was:

1. Not legally estranged or alienated from God and so his relationship with God was perfectly intact.
2. A sinless and never condemned person and therefore he was in no need of redemption.
3. The near kinsman who was outside of "*the law of sin and death*" because he was "*the only begotten Son*" by holy spirit—a new creation who derived his life directly from God (John 1:13), but of course, of the same flesh as Mary. So he was the equal of Adam before Adam sinned.
4. Not subject to the death penalty, in being sinless, his future indestructible life (Heb. 1:16) was not forfeit, so he could "receive (*or take*. Gk. *labain*) it back again" (John 10:17, 18). He paid with his life-blood as a mortal, but received, through resurrection, life as an immortal.

### JESUS AS THE IMAGE OF GOD

After Adam's sin, he and his offspring continued to reflect "*the image of God*" (Gen. 9:6 and 1Cor. 11:7), but to a lesser extent. However, Adam had never fully reflected the image of God because he was still mortal, perishable and weak (1Cor 15). If he had faithfully obeyed God he would then have been granted immortality, imperishability and glory. Then he would have been fully "the image of God." In contrast Jesus did become fully "the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation" (Col. 1:15) and "the brightness of His glory and the **express image** of His person" (Heb. 1:3); yet throughout Jesus' life he was in the image of God to the same level as the perfect but mortal Adam. He was only fully in God's image after his resurrection to immortality (1Cor. 15:42-49, 51-54).

### SUMMARY

- Because Adam never had 'sinful flesh' neither did anyone else including Mary.
- Jesus was, therefore, not born from a person with "sinful flesh" although Mary was a sinner "sold under sin."
- Jesus was the only possible substitute because he was "the only begotten Son of God"—holy (Luke 1:35) and so free from sin both in character and nature.
- All who accept Christ as Adam's substitute and as their own substitute are no longer under Adamic sin and so not under the judicial death penalty incurred by Adam. So they are now "in Christ" and no longer "in Adam."
- The Scriptures never state the idea that Jesus offered his life for himself first. They only ever state that he offered his life for others.

### APPENDIX

#### JESUS DID NOT LITERALLY TAKE BLOOD TO HEAVEN

- ❖ "**Not with** the blood of goats and calves, but **with** his own blood He entered the most holy place..."  
(Heb. 9:12).

The translation of the word *dia* as meaning 'with' is incorrect. Correct translations are *through* or *by means of* as in NASB, ESV, Rotherham and NIV. According to F.F Bruce these versions correct a fault that was introduced into the RV. Hence ESV renders Hebrews 9:12 as:

- ❖ “He entered once for all into the holy place, not **by means of** the blood of goats and calves, but **by means of** his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

There is no thought here of Jesus taking his blood to heaven **with** him, but simply that because Jesus had made the perfect sacrifice of his own blood he was granted entry into the holy place.

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