**Was Jesus “Made To Be Sin” For Us?**

It never ceases to amaze me that some gospel preachers reject what a verse says evidently because they think someone might get the wrong idea from the way the verse reads. For example, II Corinthians 5:21a says “For he hath made him to be sin for us,” and my friend Bob Myhan wrote on Facebook on 3-31-14 “In a recent Facebook post, a certain woman preacher was called a heretic for teaching that Jesus became sin. And **so she is**!” You might wonder how Bob can call someone a heretic for basically quoting a verse. What I think is happening is Bob accepts the false Calvinistic addition of “guilty of” to this verse. And Bob knows the Bible doesn’t teach the guilt of our sin was transferred to Jesus, therefore he rejects the actual wording of the verse. But instead of saying the verse is wrong, gospel preachers ought to say what the verse says is correct, and then explain what the verse means (if they feel they must).

Remember our longtime illustration where a preacher just quotes Mark 16:16 word for word, and a lady replies “that’s just your interpretation”? The point being the lady is really rejecting Mark 16:16 itself because an “interpretation” was not given to reject. I guess we’re going to have to quit using that illustration – since we are doing the same thing now on II Corinthians 5:21a (and Isaiah 53:6c).

But what does the verse mean? Well, it doesn’t mean Jesus took upon himself the guilt of our sin. It is impossible for guilt to be transferred. History (who done it) cannot be rewritten. II Corinthians 5:21a is saying the same thing as Isaiah 53:6c. God “made him to be sin for us” is equal to God “hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Let me illustrate: Suppose the Mob boss ordered a lowly underling to take the rap/fall (penalty) for a crime more important mobsters had committed. The mobsters let off the hook could accurately say – “For the boss hath made him to be dirty for us.” Wouldn’t that mean the low man on the totem-pole substituted for the big wigs, that he took their punishment for their crime, even though he wasn’t guilty of their crime? Likewise Jesus was made to be sin for us, that is, he took our punishment for us (Isaiah 53:5), not our guilt.

Jesus was “made … to be sin,” that is, literally treated like a sinner by God. Not in the sense Jesus sinned - in any shape, form, or fashion. Instead I like the way David Lipscomb explained it on page 81 of his Gospel Advocate commentary on II Corinthians - “God had made Jesus who committed no sin to suffer as though he had sinned.” So II Corinthians 5:21a is teaching the same thing as Galatians 3:13. Saying Jesus was made to be sin for us is the same as saying Jesus was made a curse for us.

Some want to change “sin” to “sin offering” in II Corinthians 5:21a, but this Greek word “harmatia” is in the New Testament 174 times; in the KJV it is translated “sin” 172 times, “sinful” 1 time, and “offense” 1 time. This “sin offering” rendering would make the Greek word “harmatia” mean opposite things (“sin” and “sin offering”) in the same verse. Doesn’t that run contrary to a standard rule of hermeneutics somewhere? And wouldn’t this word addition to the verse be counter to the main point of the verse - the irony that Jesus became what he never did?

There must be a reason no standard translation has “sin offering” in II Corinthians 5:21a:

[KJV](http://www.biblestudytools.com/kjv/) - For he hath made him to be **sin** for us, who knew no sin …

[ASV](http://www.biblestudytools.com/asv/) - Him who knew no sin he made *to be* **sin** on our behalf …

[ESV](http://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/) - For our sake he made him to be **sin** …

[NASB](http://www.biblestudytools.com/nas/) - He made Him who knew no sin to be **sin** in our behalf …

[NIV](http://www.biblestudytools.com/niv/) - God made him who had no sin to be **sin** for us …

[NKJV](http://www.biblestudytools.com/nkjv/) - For He made Him who knew no sin to be **sin** for us …

RSV- For our sake he made him to be **sin** who knew no sin …

[Young's Literal Translation](http://www.biblestudytools.com/ylt/) - for him who did not know sin, in our behalf He did make **sin** …

Would the reader be willing to admit - If all the standard translations are correct on this verse, the position this article takes is true? And the “sin offering” (no Substitution) position is only true if all the standard translations are wrong?

Instead of denying what a verse actually says (as Bob Myhan did with II Corinthians 5:21a; others do the same), wouldn’t it be better to accept what a verse says and then explain what it means? We are certainly no longer a “people of the book” anymore - when we feel the need to change the text of scripture to fit our doctrine.