**What Does The Bible Mean When It Says Jesus “Bore” Our Sins?**

There is some controversy among Christians about what passages like I Peter 2:24 and Hebrews 9:28 mean when they say Jesus “bare our sins.” Fortunately, as we say “the Bible is its own best commentary” and it does not leave us in the dark about the phrase. We don’t have to search high and low for some obscure translation or definition from some source nobody has ever heard of in an attempt to explain away the plain meaning; instead we can just believe what the Bible says straight out is the meaning for Jesus bearing our sins.

This terminology is found twice in Isaiah 53 - likely Hebrews 9:28 is a quote from Isaiah 53:12, and I Pet 2:24 would be a reference to Isaiah 53:11 and/or 12. BibleStudyTools.com says the word “bare” (nasa, Strongs #5375) in Isaiah 53:12 means “to lift, bear up, carry, take.” The context of Isaiah 53 confirms this definition: verse 6c says “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” If something is “laid” on you, then you “bear” it of course. So verse 6 tells us exactly what verses 11 and 12 are saying – Jesus bore our sins in the sense that our sins were laid on Him.

Many Christians only give lip service to the rule of interpretation that says context helps dictate the meaning of a verse. They only follow that rule when the context seems to uphold their preconceived view of a verse. If the context dictates another meaning, for example how Isaiah 53:5-6 explains our phrase in 11-12, they throw the context rule right out the window. They only care about context when it suits their purposes.

The scapegoat of Leviticus 16 affords the same definition for “bearing sin”: verse 22 says “the goat shall **bear upon him all their iniquities**” and verse 21 has “all **their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat**.” So the goat bore the sin of the Israelites in the sense their sins were put on the goat. Of course, the scapegoat is only a type of Christ; he didn’t really take away their sins. In reality Jesus is the one who bore the sin of the Israelites (and ours). In reality our sins were placed on Him.

In this case, “bearing sin” means Jesus took responsibility for our sin. This meaning for the word “bear” is illustrated well by its use in Leviticus 24:15-16: “Whosoever curseth his God shall **bear his sin**. … he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him …” Another illustration: If a father has to “bear” his son’s financial debt (we might say the debt was “laid” on his shoulders), that means Dad literally takes responsibility for his son’s debt, he pays his son’s debt. Similarly, doesn’t Acts 20:28 teach Jesus paid our sin debt?

This does NOT mean the guilt of our sins was transferred to Jesus (the Calvinistic view); it is impossible to rewrite history. Instead this means Jesus took responsibility for our sins by taking our curse (Galatians 3:13) our penalty, our consequences. This is confirmed by the preceding verse, Isaiah 53:5, which teaches our sins were laid on Jesus in the sense “the chastisement of our peace was upon him.” Jesus was punished so we could have peace with God. Jesus took the punishment for our sin so we wouldn’t have to. He became the penalty substitute for mankind, and all those who trust and obey Him take advantage of that (II Thessalonians 1:8).