

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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1 THE STRANGER

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast.

Luke 24:13-17

These men were not part of the inner circle of disciples, but they too, were followers of Jesus.

One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem [or set free] Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

Luke 24:18-24

The two disciples gave a brief synopsis of the day. Of course, all of this was not news to Jesus, but he quietly waited for them to finish. He had news for them too.

He said to them, "**How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!** Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 24:25-27

Jesus told them that THE MESSIAH *had to* suffer, die and then come back to life. But Jesus didn't stop there. He went back into the Scriptures and taught them about himself, starting at the very beginning. He then progressed step by step, story by story, through the entire Old Testament. It must have been quite a lesson.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:28–32

God himself had lit a fire of understanding in their minds. They were excited!

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. Luke 24:33

You can imagine the trip back to the city as these elated men discussed what they would say to the eleven disciples. The journey was all uphill, but they must have pushed themselves. They had good news!

*There they found the *Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.*

| *Judas Iscariot had committed suicide.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy

and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**”

Luke 24:33–44

Just as he had done earlier with the two men on the road to Emmaus, Jesus used the Writings of the Prophets to explain all the events surrounding his death, burial and resurrection. Jesus took each section of the Old Testament Scriptures—the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms—and showed the disciples how it all applied to him.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Luke 24:45–48

Jesus said his death, burial and resurrection, **must happen** to fulfill Scripture. He went on to say this was such good news that it would be told everywhere, beginning at Jerusalem.

Before we go on with the story we want to stop and go back to the beginning, just as Jesus did with his disciples. We want to see what Jesus said about himself in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.

Exactly why did Jesus come to the earth, and why did he *have to* suffer and die, when all along he planned to come back to life?

Why didn’t he simply tell people to believe in him and skip the entire crucifixion?

What were these events all about—this death, burial and resurrection? What did the Law and the Prophets have to say?

The last piece of the puzzle is about to be put in place. When you understand this, you will have the whole picture.

2 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— ADAM TO NOAH —

Why did Jesus have to die? To answer this question we will go back in time, and start at the very beginning.

ADAM AND EVE

Remember the unique friendship that existed between God and man at the onset of creation? The Lord made man, not as a robot, but with a will so that by the obedient choices he made he would honor God, just as an obedient son honors his father.

You will recall that through obedience man enjoyed tremendous benefits from this relationship, for the Lord of the universe was committed to Adam and Eve's well-being. God and man were friends.

But then Adam and Eve deliberately ignored God's instructions and experimented with forbidden knowledge. Since the events surrounding this incident contain critical elements of the puzzle, the Scripture uses some powerful word pictures to help us understand what happened.

God's Word says that man felt he knew *better than the Lord* what was good for him. He chose his own path, to do his own thing, but that path led into a spiritual wilderness. Man was LOST.

Instead of listening to God, man trusted and believed Satan. Man joined Satan's rebellious ranks, thus becoming an ENEMY of God.

But such a choice had ramifications. The Scripture teaches us that sin's effects are very costly.

Because there was no trust, there was no relationship. Immediately, the unique friendship between God and man ended. Separated by sin, man was ESTRANGED from the perfect, holy God. God was no longer close. He seemed remote and distant.

Satan was not the benevolent friend God had been. Rather, the Devil manipulated man with lies to do his satanic will. Man became a SLAVE to Satan and a slave to sin.

In choosing his own way, man disobeyed the one command that God had given him. This wasn't without hurt or harm, for whenever you break a law, you also face a consequence.

God took off his mantle of friendship and donned a magistrate's cloak. As man's judge, God found man GUILTY of a crime—of breaking his law, of sinning against a holy God.

In essence, God wrote out a verdict, a *Certificate of Debt*. Man was now a DEBTOR with a price to pay. The penalty for sin was death.

Every human being would now DIE physically. The spirit would be *separated* from the body; the life *separated* from family and friends.

Because the stench of sin corrupted man's total being, God *separated* himself from mankind. Man's relationship with God was over—it was DEAD.

After physical death, there would be a SECOND DEATH. Man would be *separated* forever from God and his expressions of love. He would be confined in the Lake of Fire, the place that had been prepared for Satan and his demons.

Death in its three aspects ruled man's life, and he could do nothing about it. Man had no choice as to whether he wanted to die or not. It was a bitter, potent reality that all faced; that all shared; that all who thought soberly, feared. With absolute, utter finality, the Scripture clearly states ...

... a person shall die for his own sin.

2 Chronicles 25:4 NKJV

These word pictures help us understand just how far removed from God mankind had become as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. Man was faced with that age-old question: **How can we get rid of our sin with all its consequences and gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness so we can be accepted back into his presence?**

A DESPERATE ATTEMPT

Remember how Adam and Eve tried to cover up their sin by clothing themselves in fig leaves? We saw that, though the Lord rejected their efforts, he did not leave them in a lurch. Rather, he ...

... devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.

2 Samuel 14:14

The Lord used these events to teach Adam and Eve, as well as us, universal principles that apply to all mankind.

ACCEPTANCE

Just as Adam and Eve could not make themselves acceptable to God by fixing up their outward appearance, neither can we be accepted based on our externals. We may impress others with what we are on the outside, but God knows what we are really like.

We saw that God provided Adam and Eve with a way of acceptance, but on different terms. The Scripture says that ...

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21

The significance of this little verse would be overlooked if it weren't for other parts of the Scripture explaining it. So what does it mean? What would Jesus have told the disciples? Very simply this: Just as an animal had to die to clothe Adam and Eve in acceptable clothing, *so Jesus had to die to make us acceptable in the presence of God*. This was and is God's idea. It's God's way to acceptability.

As the disciples struggled to comprehend what Jesus was saying, there must have been a torrent of questions.

Why would God require an animal to die for Adam and Eve? Why didn't God simply clothe them with his choice of leaves? And why would Jesus have to die for us? Was there not another way? We can suppose that Jesus continued with the next story.

CAIN AND ABEL

Remember how the children of Adam and Eve brought sacrifices to God? Why did they do that? We saw that the escape route God devised had two dimensions.

There was an *inward* aspect—something they had to work through in their hearts, a choice Cain and Abel each had to make on their own.

There was also an *outward* aspect—a visual aid to help them understand what it would take to remove sin.

Remember how we saw that when Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to God, Cain brought vegetables from his garden but Abel brought the firstborn of his flock? God rejected Cain's sacrifice, but he accepted Abel's. Why?

CAIN

Inward: Cain did not believe God. Cain believed *in* God, but he did not believe *what God had said*. He had his own ideas about how to get rid of sin and be made right with the Lord.

In the same way, our world is full of people who have their own notions about God and how to please him. It's become fashionable to have a personally tailored theory. A custom-designed god is in vogue. Cain would have felt right at home.

Outward: Based on his thinking, Cain did his own thing. He brought a sacrifice that did not illustrate God's way of dealing with the sin problem. Vegetables do not shed blood. Cain ignored the fact that...

...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22

His sacrifice did not provide an *atonement-covering* for sin. The Scripture tells us...

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one... his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

1 John 3:12

ABEL

On the other hand, God accepted Abel's sacrifice.

Inward: Abel was trusting the Lord to be his Savior. This is what God wanted. God still wants people to trust him. We are told repeatedly throughout the pages of Scripture, that we are to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Outward: God accepted Abel's sacrifice because it illustrated what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

- ❖ It pictured **substitution:** Just as an innocent animal died in Abel's place, so Jesus, innocent of all sin, died in our place paying the death penalty for us.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

1 Peter 3:18

- ❖ It pictured **atonement:** From the beginning of time, the need for a blood sacrifice has been a recognized in many cultures. Now we find out why. Just as an animal shed its blood so Abel might have a covering for sin, in the same way, Jesus offered himself as the ultimate blood sacrifice so we might have forgiveness of sin. The Scripture says that the relationship that was broken by disobedience is now restored through Jesus' death on the cross.

*Once you were alienated from God and were **enemies** ...*

*But now he has **reconciled** you by Christ's physical body through death ...*

Colossians 1:21,22

As children of Adam and Eve, we were born into this world as **enemies** of God ... but now because of Jesus' physical death on the cross, we are **reconciled**. We can be friends again. The broken relationship has been restored.

Some may say, "Okay, I can see how Jesus' death took care of our sin problem, but how do we gain *a righteousness equal to God's righteousness* so we can be accepted back into his presence?"

As we said many chapters ago, this question has two facets, like opposite sides of the same coin. They are related. You can't divide them. When God took care of our sin problem, he also addressed the lack of righteousness. We will understand this more in just a few pages.

NOAH

In the days of Noah the people ignored God's Word. Perhaps they thought the old man was crazy. Whatever the case, they persuaded themselves that life existed only for the here and now. God did not withhold his judgment just because they had the wrong philosophy of life. They perished in their foolishness.

God was saying this: just as the people of Noah's day were judged for their sin, so God will judge all men, regardless of how they think.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." Psalm 53:1; 14:1

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool... Proverbs 28:26 NKJV

God will let us ignore him and even reject His way of escape for a time, but eventually we must face the inescapable conclusion: we must pay our sin-debt with our eternal death.

Remember how Noah and his sons were kept safe in the Ark? There was only one boat, and only one door to enter and gain refuge from the flood. There was no other option.

In the same way, Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. Just as safety could only be found inside the Ark, so only in Jesus can we find safety from everlasting punishment.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

There is only one way to God. Those who ignore or reject *the way* face the same fate as those who didn't heed Noah's warnings of the coming flood: eternal death with all its implications. The Scriptures are very explicit. Jesus is the only way to God.

BABEL

Remember how we saw that Babel was the first incident of organized *religion* in the Scripture? The people tried to build a tower to reach the heavens. We said that a definition for the word religion is this: *man's efforts to reach God*. At Babel, man slaved away with brick and tar. In the same way, religion is a taskmaster that requires constant struggle. It demands ever-increasing efforts to please God, gods, spirits or idols.

In contrast to religion, the Scripture says that the only true way to God was provided by the Lord himself, when in his mercy, *God reached down to man* in the person of Jesus Christ. All the work needed to restore the broken relationship was done by Jesus on the cross.

You can almost see the glimmer of excitement in the disciples' eyes as they listened to God's plan through thousands of years of history being fulfilled in Jesus. For centuries, man

had looked forward to the day when he would be delivered from judgment of sin. Now that time had come. But Jesus wasn't finished with his explanation. He continued, no doubt, with the story of Abraham.

3 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— ABRAHAM TO THE LAW —

The disciples must have leaned forward as Jesus launched into his explanation of the story of Abraham.

Remember when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on the mountains of Moriah? Abraham's son was under God's order to die and, in reality, he deserved to die for he was a sinner. Abraham bound his son and placed him on the altar—helpless.

What God was saying is this: Just as Abraham's son was helpless and could not save himself, so all of us are bound by sin and cannot save ourselves from its consequences.

Remember how Abraham took the knife and prepared to plunge it into his son? Abraham was trusting in God's goodness to provide a solution to death. At the last moment, God called from Heaven and stopped him. Because of Abraham's trust, the Lord provided a *substitute* sacrifice for his son.

The Scripture says that Abraham named the mountain "*The Lord Will Provide*." One would have thought he would have named it "*The Lord Has Provided*," but no, he named it "*The Lord Will Provide*." It was as if Abraham was looking forward to a time when another sacrifice would be made—one which would *provide* salvation for the whole world. Two thousand years later, on the same mountains, Jesus the Messiah fulfilled Abraham's prophecy, and laid down his life as the perfect sacrifice.

A SUBSTITUTE

Just as the ram died in the place of Abraham's son, so *Jesus died in our place*. We should have died and been punished for our sin, but Jesus died and took our punishment on the cross. He is *our substitute*.

If the ram had not died, then Abraham's son would have perished. If Jesus had not died, then we would have had to pay our *own* sin-debt.

The Scripture says that God honored Abraham's faith.

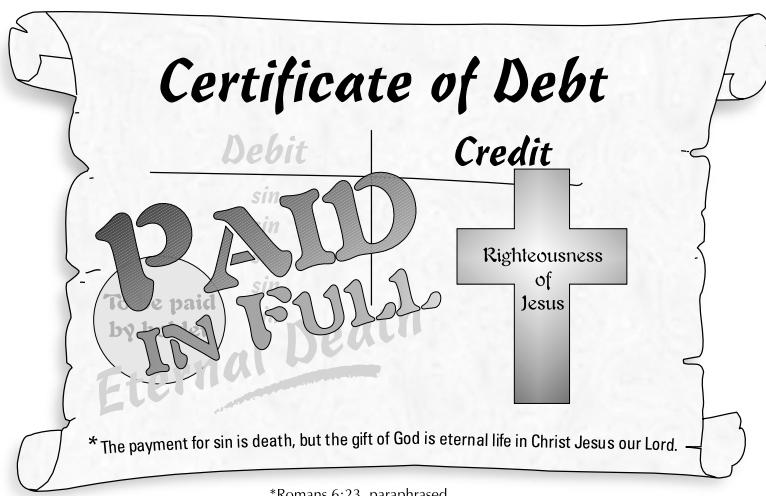
"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3

Remember that *Certificate of Debt* that every human has as a result of sin? The Scripture says that God *credited righteousness* to Abraham's account because of his faith. God did that for Abraham because the Lord was looking ahead to what Jesus would do on the cross. The Bible says that...

*The words "it was credited to him" were written **not for him [Abraham] alone, but also for us**, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.*

Romans 4:23,24



Down through history, every person has carried a *Certificate of Debt*, a massive sin-debt that each one was accountable to pay. The only way that debt could be paid was with one's own eternal death.

But then Jesus came. His death completely paid man's sin-debt—past, present and future. That is why Jesus cried, "It is finished." *The debt is paid!*

But the payment made by Jesus is only effective if one believes. The Scripture says ...

... God will credit righteousness—**for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.** *Romans 4:24*

Remember that the word *believe*, as used in the Scripture, has a fuller meaning than we sometimes give it.

- ❖ The terms *faith*, *belief*, *trust* and *confidence* all mean the same.
- ❖ Genuine faith is built on *fact* (i.e. “Jesus died in our place for our sin”). Faith is not built on *feeling forgiven*.
- ❖ True biblical belief does not stop with mental assent to the truth. It includes a *heart trust*, a confidence in the facts expressed by a voluntary act of the will. We *choose* to believe (e.g. “I believe that Jesus has paid **my** sin-debt”).

All of this would have been good news to the disciples. It should be good news to us as well. The Word of God says ...

... everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. *Romans 15:4*

The accounts of Abraham’s faith and sacrifice were stories that the disciples knew well. Although they had heard them since childhood, now they were seeing the whole picture for the first time. As Jesus spoke, one could have heard a pin drop. Every eye was glued on him, THE PROMISED SAVIOR, now in their midst. Jesus continued.

THE PASSOVER

Remember when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and God delivered them from Pharaoh with great plagues? The last plague was the death of the first-born child. God had said that if the Israelites followed his Word, they would be safe from this tragedy.

Do you recall how the Israelites were to sacrifice a lamb? Well, the Scripture tells us that Jesus is our Lamb.

It seems hardly a coincidence that, from the time of Jesus’ birth, he was identified with these harmless creatures. He was born in a stable, a place where little lambs could be sheltered.

His first visitors were shepherds, men who cared for lambs and made sure that they came to no harm. We are told that Bethlehem, his birth city, was commissioned by the high priests as a place to raise lamb sacrifices for use in the Temple. John the Baptist said of Jesus:

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29

So when we find Jesus identified as the Passover lamb, we shouldn't be surprised. Consider a few of the parallels.

Remember how the Passover lamb could have *no defect*?

Jesus was *sinless*.

The lamb had to be a *male*.

Jesus was a *man*.

The Passover lamb was killed, dying *in the place of* the first-born.

Jesus died *in our place*.

The blood of the lamb was applied to the door posts and lintel of the house.

Just as safety was only found by remaining inside, so only by trusting in what Jesus did on the cross brings us safety from eternal death.

When the death angel came, wherever he saw the blood applied, he would *pass over* that house.

In the same way, God provided a way for his judgment to *pass over* us, and in so doing all the judgment we deserved came to rest upon Jesus.

God had specifically told the Israelites that they must not break any bones when they ate the Passover lamb. This was because the lamb was a *picture*, a foreshadow of Jesus. Jesus' bones were not broken either. When the Roman soldiers ...

... came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

John 19:33

As the disciples sat there, hanging onto every word, listening to Jesus explain the real significance of the Passover, they couldn't help but think of what time of year it was. Jesus had been crucified on the very day the Passover lamb died! They

had no way of knowing that the priests had hoped to kill him after the feast was over, but they did know that God's plan had triumphed. Jesus not only died on the right day, but he died at the ninth hour (3:00 P.M.), the very hour the temple lamb was offered—the hour of the evening sacrifice. He died right on schedule, **just as the prophets had said he would.**¹ The Scripture says...

... Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

1 Corinthians 5:7



THE LAW

Remember the Ten Commandments? The Israelites thought that it would be easy to obey them. Today, many people believe that you can please God by keeping the ten rules, or some modified version of them. But we saw from our study that God expects nothing less than perfect obedience.

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. *James 2:10*

Trying to keep the Ten Commandments does not restore the broken relationship with God.

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. *Roman 3:20*

The law reminds us of our age-old, two-sides-of-the-coin dilemma. *We have something we don't want—sin; and we need*

something we don't have—righteousness. The Ten Commandments cannot give us a *righteousness equal to God's righteousness.*

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Romans 3:21,22

Jesus revealed to mankind that there is a type of righteousness totally unrelated to the law, a level of goodness that comes directly from God himself. The Scripture says that to obtain this type of righteousness, all we have to do is *believe*. It's just that simple. Simple for us, that is, but for God it involved a lot more.

God's just character could not overlook sin and pretend it had not happened. Sin must be punished—there had to be death. Up to this time, man had been offering animal sacrifices as a death payment, but as we saw, they were only temporary coverings, because ...

... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:4 NASB

Was there a solution? Yes there was. In one remarkable act of selfless love ...

God presented him [that is, Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished ...

Romans 3:25

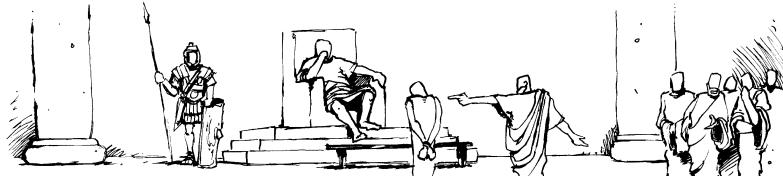
God's just nature was satisfied by the death of Jesus, a death payment for sin. God had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished because he knew that someday Jesus would die for all sin, paying the death penalty in full. Jesus died so God could ...

... demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:26

The word **justified** was a judicial term used in the courtrooms of Jesus' day. Remember the events when man sinned in the garden? At that time God took off the mantle of friendship and donned a magistrate's cloak. As a fair and just judge, God found man GUILTY of a crime, breaking God's perfect law, sinning against a holy God. Man stood before a frowning God,

accused and convicted as a perpetual, incurable lawbreaker. The sentence was death—eternal death.



But then God rose from his judgment bench, and taking off the judicial cloak, he put back on the mantle of a friend. God the Son, the Eternal Word, left the lofty heights of Heaven and descended as the God-man, Jesus, to stand with us in front of the bench. He had only one purpose—to take our sentence of death upon himself and pay it for us. Since he had no sin of his own to die for, he was able to die for the sin of others.² He died in our place. He was able to pay sin's death penalty for all time, for all mankind.

Sin was gone, but righteousness was still needed. Ah yes, we saw earlier that, just like Abraham, righteousness comes to us by faith. However, to provide *that* purity, something had to happen in God's courtroom. Jesus not only took our putrid rags of sin upon himself, but then—wonder of wonders—he thoroughly wrapped us in the pure, clean robe of *his* righteousness, *a level of righteousness that is completely equal to HIS holy perfection.*

Now, as God sits as a judge and looks across the faces of humanity, wherever he sees one clothed in Christ's righteousness, he can honestly and justly say, *"In my heavenly courtroom, that man, that woman, stands before me perfect."* The Almighty Judge of Heaven raises his gavel and, with a crash, declares us *"Righteous!"*

That is the meaning of the word JUSTIFIED—to be declared righteous in God's sight. But remember: this is only true for those who believe that Jesus died in their place. The Scripture says...

... that a man is justified by faith ...

Romans 3:28 NKJV

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...

Romans 5:1 KJV

No, the Ten Commandments cannot make one righteous.

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law ...

Galatians 3:11

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

But the Law had a purpose. The Scripture says the ten commands are like a teacher who takes us by the hand, leads us to the cross, and points out to us our need for a Savior.

*... the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,
that we might be justified by faith.* Galatians 3:24 KJV

Everyone needs a Savior. Only when clothed in the righteousness of Christ, can we experience God's welcoming smile.

LOVE AND JUSTICE

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus told the disciples he *had to* die. The idea of Jesus *having to die* makes us uncomfortable—we know we don't deserve such love. Why did he say that? His death was only necessary in this sense:

If God had exclusively allowed the *just* side of his nature to rule, then we would have had to die for our own sin. Such a ruling would have been fair, but his *love* would not allow that.

On the other hand, if *love* had only ruled his character, he would have ignored sin for eternity. But that was not an option because of his *just* nature. Sin must be dealt with.

It was in his death that we find the complete and perfectly balanced expression of both attributes—boundless *love* shown and infinite *justice* satisfied. From God's point of view, *love* and *justice* made the cross necessary.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 NKJV

In doing what he did, God acted in a manner completely outside our realm of understanding. For the Creator to remain God, and yet show such compassion for his creatures that he became a human and died, is beyond our ability to comprehend. Incredible! God's ways are beyond our ways. All we can do is believe what God says in his Word and say with Mary, "*How can this be?*" and "*With God nothing is impossible.*" We submit to God's Word and will."

4 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— THE TENT TO THE BRAZEN SERPENT —

You will recall how God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle. It was an elaborate visual aid to help us understand what the Lord was doing to mend our broken relationship with him. Remember how God showed his presence among the Israelites with a pillar of cloud by day, and a column of fire by night? That *pillar* hovered over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

ONE ENTRANCE

As man approached God in the Tabernacle, the first thing he saw was the wall around the courtyard which had only one entrance, a reminder that there is only one way to God. Jesus said...

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

THE BRAZEN ALTAR

As a person entered the Tabernacle, the first piece of furniture he saw was the Brazen Altar, a reminder that the first step to a right relationship with God was through the blood sacrifice. It's the same with us. The first and only step to a right relationship with God is through Jesus, who sacrificed his life in our place.

Even a very brief comparison of these two places of death—the Brazen Altar and the Cross—show how Jesus completely fulfilled the graphic picture illustrated in the Tabernacle offerings.

The Brazen Altar

The sacrifice was . . .

... from either the herd or the flock.

... a male

... without defect

... [to] be accepted on his behalf

... to make atonement [or covering for sin] for him

... [a] blood [sacrifice]. *Leviticus 1:2–5*

The Cross

Jesus . . .

... is the Lamb of God

... is a male

... is sinless

... died in our place

... is our way to have

... forgiveness of sin

... was the blood

sacrifice made for us.

THE LAMPSTAND

Remember how God told Moses to make a lampstand of pure gold to light the Holy Place? This is a picture of Jesus who said...

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Jesus wants to deliver people out of the darkness of sin into the light of eternal life.

THE TABLE WITH THE BREAD

Remember how God told Moses to make a table and place on it twelve loaves of bread, each representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel? Again, this is a picture of Jesus who said...

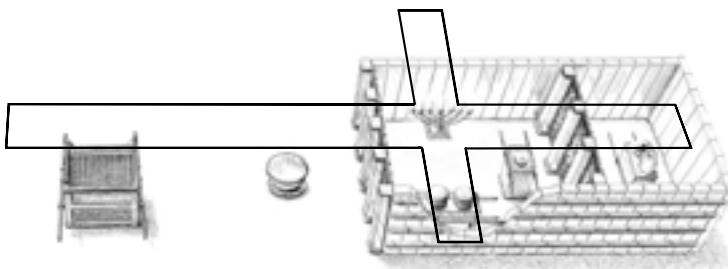
"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

John 6:35

Just as the twelve loaves were a picture of sufficient bread for everyone in Israel, so Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. As the bread of life, He offers us eternal life.

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life."

John 6:47,48

**THE CURTAIN**

Think again about how God instructed Moses to hang a thick curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Sinful man was barred from entering God's holy presence.

The Scripture says we are separated from God and cannot come into his presence because of our sin. We are ESTRANGED from God and his love.

But then Jesus came. The Scripture tells us that the Tabernacle curtain was a picture of his physical body. When he died on

the cross, the curtain was ripped in two from top to bottom. No man could have torn the veil, but God tore it to illustrate Jesus' body being sacrificed for you and me. Now by putting our trust in him, the Scripture says our sin is forgiven and we can boldly enter into God's presence. The relationship has been restored.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance...

Hebrews 10:19-22

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:13

Man was not accepted back simply as a friend. The Scripture tells us that man was placed into God's family as a full member—it says he was *adopted*.

In the Roman world of Jesus' day, adoption was *the legal rite of investing sonship*. In our modern society, a child born into a family is automatically recognized as having all the rights and privileges of that family. But in a world where men had wives, concubines and mistresses, as well as children by their slaves, a child was not a legal heir until invested with that sonship in a separate action. Once adopted as a son, you were a full member of the family.

So it is with us. We, who once were ESTRANGED from God's love, have now become members of God's family—as SONS.

*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba [Daddy], Father." So you are **no longer a slave** [to sin and Satan], **but a son**; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Galatians 4:6,7

THE ATONEMENT COVER

The Atonement Cover was that special lid on the Ark of the Covenant which was located in the Holy of Holies. It was here that the High Priest brought the blood once a year on the Day of Atonement. God gave the Israelites a way to escape judgment of their sin through the shed blood of an innocent lamb. In the same way, Jesus is now our Atonement Cover

and, through his shed blood, we find a way to escape eternal death. No longer does man need to offer lambs for a sacrifice. Jesus was the final sacrifice. God says ...

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Hebrews 10:17,18

With Jesus' death on the cross, the last Lamb had died. Since the beginning of history, it had been God's plan that the way of escape would be provided through Jesus. The sacrifices had only been a picture of what was to come. There was nothing unique about them; they could not take away sin. But now it was no longer necessary to offer any kind of sacrifice, because Jesus' blood paid the sin-debt once for all.

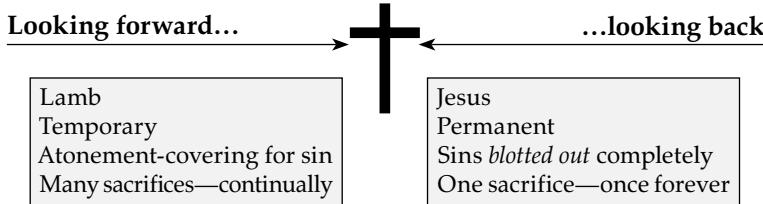
*... we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all.***

*Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus] had offered **for all time** one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.*

Hebrew 10:10-12

In 70 AD, the Roman armies under Titus destroyed the Jewish Temple, bringing to an end the sacrifices being offered on the Brazen Altar. It was as if God sent a message to the nations of the world: No longer would animal sacrifices be acceptable.

God accepted the animals because he was looking forward in history to the time when Jesus would die as the final sacrifice. When Jesus died, he did more than *cover* sin for a year. He blotted it out from God's sight forever. On the cross He cried, "It is finished!"—*the final Lamb is found.*



Jesus may have told his disciples many more things about himself that are illustrated in the Tabernacle for it is a visual aid of incredible detail, full of comparisons. You can be sure that what Jesus did tell them was unforgettable.

MOSES AND THE BRAZEN SERPENT

Recall how the Israelites sinned and God sent the snakes. They cried out for deliverance, so God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it up in the middle of the camp. To be healed, all the people had to do was to LOOK at the serpent. There was nothing else they could do.

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up [on the cross], that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands **condemned already** because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

John 3:14-18

Man is born into this world **condemned already**. We are like the Israelites who have been bitten by snakes. We are as good as DEAD. We have no relationship with God; our bodies will eventually die and, after death, we will partake of the Second Death, punishment in the Lake of Fire.

But then Jesus enters the picture. He paid the sin-debt with his own death. However Jesus did not remain dead—he came back to life. If we look to him in faith just as the Israelites looked to the bronze snake, then he gives us spiritual life. Just as he came alive, we become spiritually ALIVE, both now and for eternity. The Scripture speaks of this as being *born again*.

*When you were **dead** in your sins... God made you **alive** with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.* *Colossians 2:13*

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us **alive** with Christ even when we were **dead** in transgressions [or sin]...* *Ephesians 2:4,5*

Once spiritually DEAD, we are now ALIVE and will dwell forever in Heaven with our Creator.

5 THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

— JOHN TO THE RESURRECTION —

As Jesus systematically explained to the disciples the significance of the events recorded in the Scripture, it is probable that he elaborated on even more accounts than we have touched on here. No doubt his disciples had keen interest in the subjects with which they had firsthand experience.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The Scripture says...

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...

Isaiah 53:6

Man chose to go his *own way*, taking a path that led him into a spiritual wilderness. The Scripture says that man is LOST.

But then Jesus came looking for us. While on earth he told a parable that describes God's concern.

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:3-7



God could have stayed in Heaven and forever turned his back on mankind, but that isn't what happened. The Scripture makes it clear that Jesus took the initiative to seek us out and then, as the good shepherd, went much further.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

John 10:11

That is exactly what Jesus did. *He died for us, in our place, to pay our sin-debt.* That is love in all its perfection. Yes, God is love, but not without tremendous cost. When Jesus was on the cross he cried out,

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" *Mark 15:34*

Jesus didn't just die a physical death, there was also a spiritual dimension. *Sin demands separation.* In those desperate hours on the cross, Jesus experienced an awful separation from God the Father, as he took the sins of the world on himself.

The Scripture says that the sky grew dark although it was midday. It seems as though the Father did not want the world to see the agony that the Son went through, as Jesus willingly took our sin on himself, became our substitute Lamb, and died. God allowed it; indeed, he planned it. Just as the prophet Abraham had agonizingly raised the knife to slay his beloved son, so God laid the punishment for our sins on his Son. Abraham's son was spared death, but God's Eternal Son was not spared. He was the perfect and final sacrifice.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

The Scripture says that...

God made him who had no sin to be *sin for us...

2 Corinthians 5:21

This verse is not saying that Jesus became a sinner. The word **sin* has the idea of a sin-offering. *"God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be a sin-offering for us..."* When Jesus took our sin, God poured out on him all the fury of his rightful anger on sin. Then Jesus was able to do something we could not do. He said, *"It is finished!"* If we had paid our own sin-debt, we would have gone on and on paying—for eternity. We could never have said, *"It is finished."* But Jesus paid it all. The rest of the verse reads:

...so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

It's *in him* we find righteousness! It's not ours. *God gives us His righteousness.* It's the greatest of all exchanges. On the cross, Jesus took our foul, loathsome sin and then, when we trust him, he gives us his clean, pure righteousness. No longer do

we need the blood of a lamb to cover our sin; we are clothed in something far better, the righteousness of Christ. Remember that age-old question asked by the prophet Job?

“... how can a mortal be righteous before God?” Job 9:2

How can man get rid of his sin and gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness so he can be accepted in God's presence? The complete answer is found in this one verse. Read it again.

God made him who had no sin to be [a] sin [offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

THE RESURRECTION

Jesus died, yes, but he didn't stay dead like the prophets of the past. Jesus came back to life to prove that death had no power over Him. He said...

“*The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.*” John 10:17-18

The Romans have been blamed for executing Jesus, and the religious leaders for pressuring them to do it. Over the centuries, the Jews have faced immense persecution on the premise that the whole sorry affair was *their* fault. Such a perception is completely false. The Scripture states clearly that it was *Jesus* who voluntarily laid down his life. No one forced him to die against his will. It was his choice, motivated by his love for us. The truth of the matter is that the sins of the whole world were responsible for nailing Jesus to the cross.

The resurrection was a powerful display that God's *just* nature was satisfied with Jesus' death on our behalf. The payment had been made and accepted as sufficient! The grave could not hold him in its clutches. He had victory over death! Jesus had broken sin's grip, defeated Satan's power and removed death's terrible finality.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

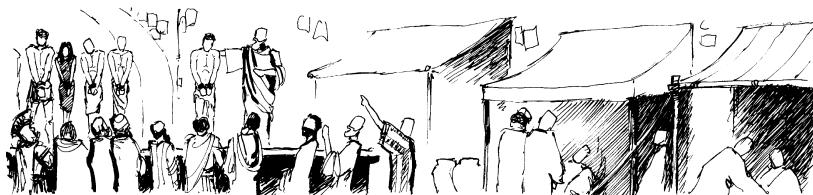
Hebrews 2:14,15

REDEEMED

For centuries, man had been a SLAVE to Satan's will. Through blatant lies, imitation of the truth, even the denial of his own existence, Satan manipulated mankind for his own purposes. But even independently of Satan's influence, man could not live a perfect life. Man was a SLAVE to sin.

But then Jesus came and REDEEMED us. It is difficult for us to grasp the rich significance connected with this word if we do not understand its association with ancient slavery.

A wealthy man would go to the slave market to buy a slave. There he would see the captives chained, humbled and broken, each being sold for a given sum. The man would pay the asking price and the slave would become his. So far nothing unusual, but now the story takes an interesting twist. On rare occasions, the new owner would then take his new slave out of the slave market, break off the chains and set him free. When this happened, it was said that the slave had been REDEEMED.



That is what Jesus did for us. We were bound by the chains of sin and Satan in the slave market of life. We were helpless to deliver ourselves. But then Jesus came and purchased us, paying the price with his own blood. He then took us out of the market, broke off the chains and set us free.

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed** from the empty way of life..., but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Peter 1:18,19

*In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Ephesians 1:7

THE SHEEP PEN

Now, let's continue with the analogy Jesus used in describing us as sheep. Remember how, at night, a good shepherd

would sleep in the entrance of the sheep pen to protect the flock? Jesus said ...

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

John 10:9

The pen had only one gate. In the same way, Jesus is the only door to eternal life. There is no other way to be saved from the consequences of sin.

... Just as there was only one way in which Cain and Abel could approach God;

... just as there was only one door to safety in Noah's boat;

... just as there was only one door to the Tabernacle;

... and just as there is only one door to a sheep pen, so Jesus is the only way to God.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

As the disciples listened to Jesus teach from the Law and the Prophets, they must have had premonitions of the consequences of his message. They lived in the Roman Empire. The Romans were tolerant of other religions up to a point, but they had also come to believe that Caesar was a god. The Romans wouldn't object to Jesus being presented as *another way* to God, but to teach what Jesus taught—that *He* is the *only* way—would jeopardize their lives. According to extra-biblical sources, all but one of the eleven original disciples were put to death for this message. They died for what they knew to be true. The eleventh was exiled.

THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees, of all people, were impeccably religious. They had an extensive list of do's and don'ts.

Today, one of the most common misconceptions about life is that people can earn their way to Heaven by doing enough good to outweigh their bad.

The Pharisees were very religious, but Jesus condemned both their lives and their teaching as being misleading. Jesus said that the only true way to God was by faith in him.

We put faith into practice every day. You are probably applying a principle of faith right now. If you are sitting in a chair, you are trusting in the chair to hold you up without collapsing. It's doubtful that you sat down thinking—"I am going to trust this chair to be sturdy"—but nonetheless you exercised faith in the chair. In a sense, faith in itself is neutral. What is important is this: *in what or in whom* are you placing your trust? The chair may collapse—but then it's only a chair. However, if you are placing your faith in Jesus having paid your sin-debt, then you can have absolute confidence that he has done just that. He has promised.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8,9

The Scripture says we are *saved* from the consequences of sin through faith in Jesus Christ. This *salvation* is a *gift* from God. We didn't have to earn it by any religious act or good work.

Gifts are free. If you work for a *gift*, it is no longer a gift. **Gifts in the truest sense are undeserved.**

If we feel we deserve it, then it ceases to be a *gift* and becomes an *award*. The eternal life God gives us is truly a gift because we don't deserve it in any way.

The Pharisees were convinced that their good deeds would please God. But God says that if he accepted people based on what they themselves did, then people would *boast* about their goodness. He saves us from judgment, not based on how good we are, but on the basis of our *faith*.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

By faith, we believe that Jesus died *in our place* for our sin.

By faith, we believe that Jesus paid *our* sin-debt.

By faith, we believe that God's justice was satisfied by that death. We believe that when he looks at us, he no longer sees our sin, but he sees us clothed in Jesus' righteousness.

By faith, we believe that God gives us the gift of eternal life.

It's all faith, but it's *not* blind faith. It's *faith* that is built on the *facts* we find in the Scripture.

Some people add a spiritual aura to faith. It becomes quantified. You either have a lot of faith or just a little. But that thinking confuses the issue. Putting faith in what Jesus did on the cross for us is similar to a drowning man *nodding* vigorously to his rescuer when the lifesaver says, "Will you trust me to save you?" The size of the *nod* is immaterial. The point is *not* the *nod* at all. The point is that the drowning man is acknowledging and trusting in the lifeguard to rescue him. For the drowning man to later claim that his big *nod* saved his life would be ludicrous. So it is with us. We are to trust in Jesus to save us from our sin, but the size of our trust is not what saves us; it is what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last...

Romans 1:17

In continuing the analogy of a drowning man, it is also important to *know* that you are drowning. If you think you are floating just fine, you will reject all help. However, even if you *know* you are drowning but are too proud to ask for help, you will drown all the same. Others may see that you are floundering, but they will be unable to help you until you allow them. It's the same spiritually. You must see yourself as a helpless sinner before you can be saved from your sin-debt. That's the starting point.

The Scripture is full of illustrations of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. We can only conjecture as to which of those illustrations Jesus used as he taught the disciples. Undoubtedly, he used most or all of the ones we have touched on. He probably used more. When he had finished teaching, the room must have been silent. The question which remained for Jesus' disciples is the same question which remains for us. In whom are you placing your faith? In yourself, your religion, your ideas, your good works, **or** in the fact that Jesus died in your place to pay your sin-debt?