

## Lesson 5: God's Solution to the Problem of Sin

- I. Humankind has chased the dream of physical immortality throughout the ages, being drawn by an unquenchable appetite for the pleasures of life
  - A. Typically, that dream focuses on fleshly desires, fame, fortune and success, while somehow managing to overlook the worldly pain and sorrow naturally arising from the consequences of sin
  - B. The irony here is immortality already has been achieved, not physically but on God's terms in the spiritual realm
    1. God granted it to us when He created humankind in His own image and likeness
    2. Our physical bodies were equipped with a spirit that survives physical death and will live on in eternity
  - C. The question is: will that existence be with or without God?
  - D. Left on our own, we chase after the things of the world
    1. The lust of the flesh
    2. The lust of the eyes and
    3. The boastful pride of life (I John 2:16)
    4. As we give in to these temptations, we sin against God by missing the targeted holy behavior that He has desired from us since the beginning
    5. When that happens, our spiritual bond with God is broken because a Holy God cannot maintain fellowship with sinners
  - E. The Problem of Sin is: it leads to a spiritual separation that extends beyond the physical realm into eternity (Isa 59:1-2; Matt 25:41)
    1. With an eternal separation from God also comes a separation from all the blessings God supplies
    2. Without them, we are left in an unGodly, unholy environment that the Bible describes as a place of darkness, torment and hopelessness (Matt 8:12; 25:41)
    3. That is the reality of Hell and spiritual death
  - F. The disaster comes from the fact that all of us have sinned (Rom 3:23), so without some form of intervention, our destiny is an eternity separated from God in Hell
  - G. By now, any reasonable person would be in a state of near panic
  - H. Is there a solution to the Problem of Sin? - that is the subject of this lesson
- II. Let us begin by asking, "Is there something we can do to save ourselves?"
  - A. For example, could we simply throw ourselves at the mercy of God and ask for His forgiveness?
    1. Although that may sound good, since we have said God is loving and merciful, it alone does not work (at least not without some other factors to be considered shortly)
    2. The problem with this approach comes from the fact that God is just and righteous
      - a. Sin or lawbreaking must be accompanied by consequences to maintain God's state of righteousness and to be true to the just nature of God
      - b. If God simply ignored our behavior or granted unconditional forgiveness, then justice would not be served and God would not be "set apart" from sin

- c. This would make God unjust and unrighteous violating His Holy nature
    - d. That can never happen, so this scheme will not save us
  - B. As another possibility, suppose we offer to perform good works to make up for our sinful disobedience?
    - 1. While it may seem reasonable, this is unacceptable even in our secular judicial system
      - a. A good deed does not reverse the consequences of breaking the law
      - b. All the good done by a murderer will not bring a dead victim back to life
        - 1) Our legal system has no statute of limitations for killing someone
        - 2) In our society, despite years of Godly living, a murderer still must go to trial, even years later - to face the justice of the court
    - 2. Moreover, in Eph 2:8-9, the Apostle Paul clearly teaches that humankind is not saved as a result of works, so that no one may boast
      - a. We cannot earn our salvation
      - b. Once we have broken God's law, we are lawbreakers
      - c. Good works do not change that fact
      - d. We are still guilty before the court of God
  - C. Well then, how about finding someone else to take the blame for my sin?
    - 1. We are pretty good at blaming others anyway
    - 2. Perhaps there is some loved one who is willing to fall before God and say punish me for the sin of another
    - 3. In that case, there is a sacrificial offering and a consequence proposed for my sin
      - a. Although this seems appealing, it neglects the fact that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23)
      - b. What that means is any accountable person willing to take my sin is already guilty of sin themselves and deserving spiritual death for their own actions
      - c. Hence, such an offering is worthless and meaningless
      - d. A sinner cannot offer themselves for the life of another because they are already spiritually dead from their own sin
    - 4. A just sacrifice would require someone who lived a perfect, Holy life to willingly accept the burden of the sins from another
  - D. At this point, it should be clear - by our own means, there is nothing humankind can do to make up for past sins
  - E. If there is to be a solution to the problem of sin then that solution must come from God
    - 1. But what could it be?
    - 2. How can a Holy God save us without violating His nature and at the same time still remain set apart from sin?
    - 3. Perhaps an even greater question is: why would God want to do so?
- III. Fortunately for us, God is not only Holy and just but He is also a God of Love
  - A. I John 4:8, says: "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."
  - B. God's love for humankind is rooted in the fact that among all the creation only Humankind was created in His image and likeness

1. It is our dual nature that makes us so unique, having not only a living physical form of flesh and blood but an eternal spirit that will survive our mortal bodies
  2. We are special and share a common spiritual bond with our Creator
  3. Ultimately, this explains the great lengths to which God was willing to go to preserve the relationship and fellowship with humankind
- C. Love, however, does not allow God to abandon His Holy nature and unconditionally pardon sinners
1. Holiness still requires God to be set apart from sin
  2. Righteousness and justice also must be preserved
  3. So how is God able to reconnect with us bridging the spiritual gap created by sin?
  4. This required the Ultimate Sacrifice - one which only God could provide.
    - a. An offering of the Son of God as a living sacrifice
    - b. "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." (I John 4:9)
- D. The idea of a living sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins was part of the Old Covenant, but these offerings were animals
1. Under the Law of Moses given to the nation of Israel, God commanded His chosen people to make a sin offering once a year on the day of atonement
  2. As part of this cleansing, bulls and goats were slaughtered before the altar
  3. God required the shedding of blood for the atonement of sin
    - a. This was explained in Lev 17:11, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."
    - b. By requiring a blood sacrifice for atonement, God made clear the association between sin and death; the price for sin was a loss of life
  4. Although God granted forgiveness to the nation of Israel on the day of atonement, the people were not justified by the blood of bulls and goats
    - a. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4)
    - b. Animals are but flesh and blood without a spirit - they in and of themselves have nothing to offer God as a sin sacrifice
  5. Sacrifices under the Law of Moses were only a shadow of the good things to Come (Heb 10:1)
    - a. In those sacrifices, there was a reminder of sins year by year (Heb 10:3)
    - b. But, the cleansing and atonement was attained through the New Covenant established by the death of Jesus Christ
    - c. "For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it." (Heb 9:15-16)
    - d. "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb 10:10)
    - e. Forgiveness of sins is attainable only through the sacrifice of Jesus

- f. The Apostle Peter put it this way: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
- E. Who was this Jesus and why was He so special?
1. In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul wrote the following: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)
  2. Further evidence for the identity of Jesus was provided to Peter, James and John when Jesus was transfigured in glory before them, shining intensely as the voice of God the Father came from a bright cloud saying: ". . . This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matt 17:5)
  3. These passages reveal the extraordinary nature of Jesus
    - a. A human baby was conceived miraculously and born possessing a spirit who was the Son of God
    - b. The explanation was given to Joseph in a dream by an angel saying: ". . . Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt 1:20-21)
  4. Through Jesus, the Son of God - deity lived among us as flesh and blood
- F. Now we can begin to appreciate how God went about providing a solution to the problem of sin
1. Jesus was able to offer Himself as a unique sacrifice taking our place in a way that none other could
    - a. Remember, sinners cannot offer themselves for the salvation of another because they are already spiritually dead from their own sin
    - b. An acceptable offering would require someone Holy, guiltless and innocent
    - c. Since we are all sinners (Rom 3:23), we cannot save ourselves or others
  2. Jesus, however, as the Son of God was able to live a Holy life, free from sin
    - a. Heb 4:15 states: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."
    - b. By living a perfect life, Jesus not only became eligible to save us from our sins but He also showed us what holy living looks like: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in

His mouth" (I Pet 2:21-22)

3. Being Holy, Jesus offered to substitute Himself as a sin sacrifice in our place bearing the price for our sins to provide a way for us to be reunited with God
    - a. I Pet 3:18 describes this saying: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;"
    - b. The Apostle Paul confirmed the same in Rom 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
  4. This was part of a pre-determined plan of God
    - a. On the day of Pentecost Peter said: "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:22-23)
    - b. Ephesians 1:7-10 read: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth."
  5. Jesus willingly laid down His life for the sins of humankind saying: "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative . . . ." (John 10:17-18)
- G. The penalty for our sins was paid by Jesus in His death on the cross
1. I Pet 2:24-25 state: "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."
    - a. From this passage, we learn the sins of humankind were placed on Jesus as He hung on the cross
    - b. During this time, He suffered for us (I Pet 2:21)
    - c. And yet, by His wounds we were healed to be able to live in righteousness and have a path to reconciliation with God (I Pet 2:24)
  2. In an even more descriptive depiction of what was taking place, the Bible says God literally made Jesus become sin for us, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (II Cor 5:21)
    - a. As that happened, God the Father had to withdraw from His Son, since His Holy nature would not allow Him to have fellowship with sin
    - b. In the midst of all this, Jesus the man, cried out in agony: ". . . 'Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?' which is translated 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?' " (Mark 15:34)

- c. For the first time in His existence, Jesus was separated from God, the Father, in spiritual death as He carried the sins of humankind in His body on the cross
    3. Shortly after that ". . . Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last" experiencing a gruesome physical death from the ordeal of crucifixion (Mark 15:37)
  - H. However, the story does not end in the death of Jesus
    1. Jesus rose from the dead just as He had prophesied to His disciples telling them: ". . . The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." (Mark 9:31)
    2. He ". . . was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 1:4)
    3. It is through His resurrection that we have proof and assurance that our existence does not end with physical death
      - a. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom 6:5)
      - b. "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." (I Cor 15:20-22)
- IV. What took place in Jesus on the cross is a profound demonstration of the love God has for each one of us - Indeed, you are special!
  - A. Through the humility and willingness of the Son of God to take on human form and allow Himself to be sacrificed on the cross as a price for our sin, we have an opportunity to escape an eternity separated from God in Hell
    1. The just and innocent One died in place of the unjust sinner in a sacrifice offered once for all humankind for all time
      - a. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (I Pet 3:18)
      - b. "so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." (Heb 9:28)
    2. Our path to redemption was secured by the precious blood of Jesus who was sacrificed to save us from our futile way of life
      - a. "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." (I Pet 1:17-19)
      - b. "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Matt 26:28)

3. Jesus was the atoning sacrifice who justified us, allowing God a way to pass over our sins
  - a. Rom 3:24-26 describe it in this way: "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
  - b. II Cor 5:18-19 say, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."
- B. Devising and executing such a plan to offer humankind a path to redemption is simply beyond our ability to comprehend; and yet, God's solution to the Problem of Sin exists through Jesus and is available to us all
  1. What we have not defined is how we go about substituting the sacrifice of Jesus as the payment for our sins.
  2. As shown earlier, there is certainly nothing we can do to earn our salvation
  3. Redemption is a gift from God but we still must claim it.
  4. We must express our desire to God to be redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus so we can be made Holy in His sight
    - a. God does not grant forgiveness and redemption unconditionally to all humankind whether they want it or not
    - b. To do so would be the same as ignoring our sin
    - c. Unconditional forgiveness and redemption would allow humankind to live an unGodly, unholy, sinful life of rebellion and yet maintain fellowship with God in eternity
      - 1) That would be contrary to God's Holy nature
      - 2) For God is just, righteous and always must remain separated from sin
- C. So how do we claim Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins?
- D. What are God's expectations from us?
- E. In the religious world today among all those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, there are disagreements about how we go about laying claim to the sacrifice of Jesus for our redemption and forgiveness of sins
- F. There are generally three different teachings about the steps to salvation
  1. One teaching is you must: first be Baptized - then you are Saved - and later you are Taught and Believe
  2. Another says you must: first be Taught - then Believe - after which you are Saved - and later Baptized
  3. The third contends you must: first be Taught - then Believe - after which you are Baptized - and then you are Saved
- G. Notice, even though we have used some words and concepts that have not yet been

properly defined, it is clear these three teachings are entirely different and indeed inconsistent

1. All of them, cannot be true
2. Key points of distinction revolve around determining:
  - a. What conditions are necessary and sufficient for salvation
  - b. And when in the process, salvation is granted by the forgiveness of sins
- H. Having differences in the teachings over how to be saved is most troubling since this is a matter of life and death; being saved or being lost; heaven or hell
- I. This is one we want to get right
- J. Ultimately, the only way to determine the Truth is to examine carefully what God has revealed to us through His written word
- K. Please join me in our next lesson as we study the Bible to determine what Jesus taught about God's Plan of Salvation during His time on earth