

What Jesus Did For Us

Introduction. The work of Jesus is the single most important event in human history. Jesus came to this world, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead. Have you ever asked the question, "Why did Jesus have to die?" Perhaps the more important question: what did Jesus' death and resurrection accomplish?

In our previous lessons, we learned what the substitution theory is, and we examined the passages often used to teach the substitution theory. In our final lesson, we need to find out what Jesus did for us so we can see, once and for all, why the substitution theory is misleading and unnecessary.

I. ***Purchasing People***

A. Ransom.

1. Jesus described His purpose to His disciples (Mark 10:45). Jesus declared that the giving of His life would be a ransom. Most of us understand the general concept of a ransom. We usually do not use the word unless we are speaking about kidnapping cases. A kidnapper takes a child and demands a ransom. The ransom is the price that must be paid to release the child. Supposing the ransom is one million dollars, this price does not represent the value of the child. The price is not equal to the child. But this is what is necessary to release the child from captivity.
2. This is the beginning concept of what Christ was going to do for us by giving us life. His death was going to set us free. What we must be set free from we will ask and answer later in the lesson.

B. Redemption.

1. Paul also describes the work of Jesus as a redeeming work (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). Redemption also depicts a price being paid. While ransom indicates a price being paid to bring about a release, redemption indicates a price being paid to buy something back. Redemption is the act of paying the ransom.
2. For example, a root beer bottle may say on the bottom, "CA redemption value." The state of California is willing to pay 10 cents for the root beer bottle. The ransom is 10 cents. The act of paying me the 10 cents is the redemption.

C. The need to be bought.

1. After sinning, Adam and Eve had to be separated from the presence of the Lord. This is described as death (Genesis 2:17). Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the permanent separation of man from God (Isaiah 59:1).

2. God's law is a reflection of God's character. Sinning violates God's holiness. Spiritual death has spread to all people because all people have sinned (Romans 5:12). None of us have reflected the character of God at all times. The Bible explains that we are slaves to Satan (Hebrews 2:14), are slaves to sin (Romans 6:17-23), and are under the fear of eternal separation, or spiritual death, from God (Hebrews 2:15).
3. The Lord set up a system of sacrifices for when the people sinned under the law of Moses. Leviticus 4-7 describes what is involved in making an offering for sin. When a person sinned, a young unblemished bull had to be killed and offered. The blood of the bull was brought into the tabernacle of the Lord and the blood was sprinkled on the articles contained therein. The rest of the bull was taken outside the camp and burned up. God wanted people to know that sin required blood.
4. However, although God was forgiving the people of their sins (Leviticus 4:26), the Bible clearly says that the blood of animals did not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). The repeated need to offer sacrifices for sin reminded the offerer of their sins. Jeremiah declared that God would establish a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and Isaiah said that the coming Messiah or Savior who would take away their sins (Isaiah 53:11).
5. To miss this aspect of the work of the coming Messiah is to miss the purpose of the Old Testament. After Jesus' crucifixion, the scriptures tell us of two men on the road to Emmaus. They were discussing with each other what had happened to Jesus (Luke 24:21). Israel was looking for a Redeemer, for the true people of Israel understood that their sins were not taken away by animal sacrifices.
6. But God cannot simply forgive all people of their sins and remain just. While it seems that such an idea would be wonderful, upon further thought we realize that God would be unjust and violate His nature by doing so. We would not like it if judges let criminals go free without punishment. The O. J. Simpson case is a classic example of people who believe justice was not served. We want and demand justice for violators of the law. We also demand justice from God. God cannot simply forgive every person and take them all to heaven. Would you like to spend eternity with the most gruesome and hated people on earth? This proposition is not acceptable.

II. ***Putting The Pieces Together (Romans 3:20-26)***

A. God's righteousness.

1. Paul declares that God's righteousness has been revealed apart from the law. The way God was going to save people from their sins and pronounce people innocent has been revealed and it does not include a system of law-keeping. In fact, the Law of Moses and the prophets attest to the fact that God would save people apart from a system of law-keeping.
2. Trying to be justified in the sight of God by acting in accordance with the character of God and not breaking His laws brings about the knowledge of sin (Romans 7:7-11). We know that we have not lived in our lives to be like God. Trying to live like God brings us the knowledge that we have come up short. This is exactly what the Law said (Deuteronomy 27:26). Similarly, we have noticed the prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah declare the need for a New Covenant that will remove our sins (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
Attempting to be saved by keeping the law reveals our failure.
3. But God has revealed another way to be declared innocent (or justified) by God. Verse 22 tells us how: through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. This way of righteousness is extended to all people because all people have missed the mark and fallen short of God's glory; i.e., in living like God. God's glory is perfect, but being good moral people does not meet the standard of God. Faith has always been necessary. In fact, Paul will spend chapters 4-5 showing that justification has always come through faith and not by the works of the law. Paul will tell the Jews that they clearly missed what God was teaching if they think circumcision or any other work of the law could save them from their sins.

B. Salvation.

1. Salvation is clearly explained in verse 24. People are justified (or pronounced innocent) by the grace of God. Nothing we have done deserves the gift that God has presented to us. How can God pronounce people innocent when all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God?
2. We are justified by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Remember that redemption was the act of paying a ransom price which brings about freedom. Rather than use money of silver or gold, the blood of Jesus was used as the ransom (1 Peter 1:18-19). Money could not redeem us. The blood of animals could not redeem us. Performing the works of the law (being good moral people) could not redeem us. Only the blood of Christ could do it.

3. The details are given in verse 25. The word "propitiation," also translated "sacrifice of atonement" in some versions, has been misunderstood. Many teach that Christ was satisfying God's wrath. Therefore God placed all His wrath on Jesus. If we were to read that Jesus was put forward by God as a satisfaction, then we could say that Jesus bore the wrath of God in His death. But the Bible does not say this.
 - a) The word "propitiation" literally means "mercy seat" (cf. Hebrews 9:5). The reason to use this word is to bring to mind the sacrifice under the Old Covenant.
 - (1) The prayer of the publican (Luke 18:13), "God be merciful to me a sinner," better translated, "God, be propitiated to me a sinner," was not a request for mercy as though God had to be persuaded to be propitious.
 - (2) Rather, it was expressive of the relationship then existing between God and the Old Testament people of God on the ground of offered sacrifice, when God was requested to be propitious on a special basis. Now the Christian can rejoice that God is propitiated.
 - b) When the sacrifice of atonement was made by the high priest for the sins of the people, the blood was sprinkled on the lid of the ark of the covenant (Leviticus 16:14-15). The lid was called the mercy seat, though there was no chair on the ark. Rather, this was the location of the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. The mercy seat was the meeting place of God and man.
 - c) Paul says that the seat of mercy, or the meeting place, is now in Jesus. He is the propitiation. Jesus is the place of mercy where we are allowed to come to the presence of God again, formerly cast out because of our sins.
4. Paul says that God showed us mercy and restraint by passing over the sins previously committed. This was the problem we asserted earlier in the lesson: the sacrifices of animals could not take away sins, yet we clearly read that God was forgiving the people. How could God overlook their sins?
5. The answer is in Jesus Christ. God demonstrates how He could be just in overlooking the sins previously committed. He would be unjust if something were not done. The price paid to release us from our slavery to Satan, sin, and death was the blood of Jesus. This sacrifice would allow God to offer forgiveness. Those under the Old Covenant had to have faith that God would take care of their sins by sending the Messiah to deliver them. Those that truly trusted in God, as seen through their obedience, would be declared

righteous by God. Abraham trusted in God to the point that he would obey anything God said (cf. Romans 1:17; 4:3).

6. But Jesus' sacrifice for sins did not only deal with the sins of those whom God had overlooked by showing mercy and grace (Hebrews 9:15). His sacrifice deals with our sins too (vs. 26). Jesus' blood not only released those under the Old Covenant from Satan, sin, and death, but also releases us from the same slavery. We have been set free. God is just in being merciful toward us in this action because Jesus' blood paid the price.
7. Could there have been another way? The sacrifices were trying to teach us that forgiveness cannot come without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). God was willing to pay a tremendous cost to set us free.

C. Faith.

1. Under the Old Covenant, faith was demanded by God for God to pronounce the person justified. God's right to forgive people under the Old Law was in the knowledge that payment would be made by the blood of His Son. Nothing has changed today. Under the New Covenant, which was established through the blood of Jesus, faith is demanded by God for God to pronounce a person justified (Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:5-10).
2. God has laid out the requirement of faith for Jesus to be our propitiation. As we have seen, Christ gives us access to the Father to bring about reconciliation between us and God. We can either return to our slavery in sin, living for ourselves as we have been, or we can keep God's covenant. We have no access to God if we reject the covenant of His Son.
3. How do we exercise our faith in Jesus' blood? We do it by removing our sins through immersion in water (Romans 6:3-8). Peter explains baptism clearly to us (1 Peter 3:21). If you are ready to request the forgiveness of sins, then you must be immersed in water to make that request. When you make that request, God will respond by taking your sins away (Acts 22:16).

Conclusion. The Bible never says Jesus was our substitute. Jesus died for our sins, removing them from us, and presents us justified. Substitution is only necessary because it proves Calvinism; otherwise, it could be discarded. Let us always stick with the scriptures and not be led away into religious error that sounds good, but is really danger in waiting.

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