

Holiness in the early Church

The early Christian church changed the world. History informs us that the seeds of this revolution were sown by Jewish missionaries who traveled throughout the known world in the one hundred years preceding the birth of Jesus. They preached that The Messiah would come very soon and would change the world. And he did. The instrument God used to accomplish this awesome change was Christians working together as a church. These early Christians were often referred to as *Nazarenes* because they were the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. They were also referred to as those who kept or followed The Way.¹ It was approximately a decade after founding of the church at the first Pentecost of the Christian era in Acts two that the disciples of Jesus the Messiah were first called Christians.²

The religion of two most powerful and populous civilizations at the time of Jesus, the Romans and the Chinese, was polytheistic. In that world, the Jews stood out as monotheistic. The Roman destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D and their complete destruction of Jerusalem after the Bar Korchba war in 135 A.D showed how frustrated they had become with the monotheistic Jews.. The Romans, as well as the Persians and Babylonians before them, allowed the nations they conquered to worship their local gods. Of course, the Roman exception was Caesar being the supreme god. But the Jews would not worship even Caesar because it violated their law to worship only YHVH. The gulf between their worlds, as displayed so well in Ben Hurr, extended to the power of their Gods. The Romans believed matter created the titans who created the gods whereas the Jews believed YHVH had created everything. To add to Roman resentment, misunderstanding and anger, the Jewish rebellions against Roman authority were often in the name of their God, YHVH.

This is the world in which the early Christians, usually referred to as Keepers of The Way or Nazarenes, carried out their commission of Matthew 28:19-20. “Go ye therefore, and teach all

¹ Acts 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

² Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world.”³ Less than two hundred years after the founding of the Christian church, polytheism in its original form was rapidly declining in the Western world, not to see a comeback until Wicca made inroads in the religious marketplace in the last hundred years.

It is absolutely true that Islam converted the majority of Africa and large swaths of Asia to monotheism 500 years later, usually by the edge of a sword, but how did the Christian church effect this change in the Western world controlled by Rome? What were the characteristics of this early church, almost exclusively Jewish in its first few years, that allowed them to carry the message that YHVH was the God of creation and He wanted to extend His covenant to the entire world?

Jesus’ own words show that his death started the New Covenant. “For this is my blood of the new testament (*diatheke*) , which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:28) The Greek word *diatheke* is best translated as a contract or a covenant. The crucifixion of YHVH’s only begotten son was the instrument He used to open the doors of His covenant to the entire world, symbolized by the rending of the temple veil. “And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.” (Luke 23:45-7) The confession of the gentile centurion in Luke 23 depicts some gentiles realizing the power of Jesus and his death even before he was resurrected and foreshadows how Jesus’ death and resurrection would affect the gentiles. And make no mistake, Jesus’ resurrection is the tipping point in God’s plan for all of mankind.

This paper is designed to show how God revealed His loving plan to covenant with all of mankind via the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It will also show that God used human beings to carry out the mission of spreading this message, just as He had used Enoch, Noah,

³ Matt. 28:19-20

Abraham, Moses and the nation of Israel, to name just a few, to spread that message. Paul's description of how the Christian church was formed and how it functioned, as coherently and comprehensively described by Banks in *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*,⁴ depicts the apostolic Christian church as a new and unique organization that world had never seen or experienced before. This unique organization was used by God to change the world.

What were the characteristics of this early church that allowed them to be used so powerfully by God? Why did the Christian church grow like wildfire for most of its first two centuries? What changed in the Christian church in the 200's and into the 300's A.D.? And viewing the actions, functions and writings of the Christian church through the prism of history and scripture leaves no doubt that in that time frame the Christian church did change dramatically. This paper is designed to answer how and why the church changed in the context of holiness.

There is no doubt that Christian church began to change after the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D according the John's writings and this change escalated after the destruction of Jerusalem in 135 A.D. However, this change accelerated during the later portions of the 200's A.D., cumulating with the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Constantine's reorganization of the church into a corporate entity and Christianity's recognition as the official religion of the Roman Empire at the council of Nicaea finished this transition. Barna's and Viola's *Pagan Christianity*⁵ goes into great detail about how Christianity went from being from being a confederacy for God to being a federally run, top down organization with feudal lords presiding over religious serfs. Christianity went from being persecuted to privileged. They went from a priesthood of believers to priests and believers. They went from sanctifying God in their homes to sitting in sanctified chapels listening to words about sanctification. This corporatization of the Christian church basically replaced group holiness with top down governance. Although individuals are called to be holy, it is the holiness of the body working together that magnifies the glory of God. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are

⁴ Banks, Robert, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994

⁵ Viola, Frank and Barna, George, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*, Tyndale House Publishers, 2008

one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”⁶ The body, the church, a whole, with many parts was designed to do good works⁷, and those good works changed the Roman world of two millennia ago. Christians just don’t have the same effect on our world, in large part because we have such a different idea of what we are and what our mission is as compared to that early church.

From Genesis 3:15 to the end of the prophets and into the New Testament, scripture informs us that God’s intent was always to transform His covenant’s adherents into holy individuals. Individuals like Abel and Enoch and Noah walked the holy path with God before the Flood. The children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were given the opportunity to walk that path until the coming of the Messiah and some of them, like David, Ezra and Hezekiah took God up on His offer to walk with Him. And after the coming of the Messiah, the Christian church was supposed to use the God given talents of each individual to collectively serve God in holiness by making disciples who would walk that holy walk, edifying one another and performing any other duty they were called for. Holiness is a theological term often defined as being sacred or set apart by God, but I believe a better scriptural definition of holiness is for Christians to actively seek to be like God,⁸ which is what Jesus said, was and did.⁹ The book of Leviticus is replete with God instructing His called out people to be holy because He is holy.¹⁰ In the New Testament, Peter

⁶ 1 Cor. 12:12-4

⁷ Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

⁸ 1 Pet. 1:14-6As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

⁹ John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father?

¹⁰ Lev 11:44-5 For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.

Lev. 19:2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy.

Lev. 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I *am* the LORD your God.

wrote, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”¹¹ Holiness is longed for in one of today’s most popular worship songs written by Micah Stampley.

Holiness, holiness is what I long for (that's what I long for)
Holiness is what I need
Holiness, holiness is what
You want for me

Holiness should be the aim of Christians and the goal of Christianity, but this goal, which God said is near at hand and possible for us to achieve,¹² has been totally transformed and muted by modern Christianity’s credo of being saved by grace through faith alone¹³ (this is mostly a Protestant and charismatic Catholic credo) or by the Catholic practice of placing layer upon layer of separation between man and God the Father. Most people welcome these types of devices because it separates them from God, just the Israelites wanted to be separated from God when they were at the base of Mount Sinai.¹⁴ The Israelites knew they were not perfect as God is perfect, just as Christians do, and people have used these devices to avoid confronting those

Lev. 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy, and have severed you from *other* people, that ye should be mine.

Lev. 21:6 They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, *and* the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.

¹¹ 1Pet 1:15-6

¹² Deut. 30:11- 20For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that* ye shall not prolong *your* days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, *and* that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

¹³ Paul does write in Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace are you saved through faith,” but adding the word alone to the end of this phrase totally changes Paul’s meaning dramatically, thus continuing the twisting of Pauline writings into something he never intended and would not recognize as his thought process.

¹⁴ Ex. 20:18-19 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

imperfections. However, God knows those imperfections better than we do, yet He loves us and has never demanded perfection from His physical children. What He has demanded is maturity and holiness, just as any good father would never demand perfection from a 10 year old child. Jesus was very clear on this point when he said, “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁵ It may sound like a shocking statement to many Christians today, but you don’t have to be perfect to be holy according to scripture. Holiness is a lifestyle, not a belief. The metaphor for living a holy lifestyle is to be like a child. The early church was reminded of this point over and over again.

But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.¹⁶

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.¹⁷

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.¹⁸

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.¹⁹

And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.²⁰

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.²¹

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.²²

Embracing the role of a child growing into the stature of their holy Father is what drove the early church according the writings of the apostles and some of the anti-Nicene fathers, like Polycarp

¹⁵ Matt. 18:3

¹⁶ Mark 10:14

¹⁷ John 13:33

¹⁸ Gal. 4:19

¹⁹ 1 John 2:12

²⁰ 1 John 2:28

²¹ 1 John 3:7

²² 1 John 3:18

and Polycrates. Of course you can become more holy just as a child can become more mature, but if you are living a covenant lifestyle then you are holy in the sight of God. The holiness of the early church drove the changes it affected.

Unlike the early church that accepted its role as little children growing up and in the process changing the world around them as a group, the current Christian church is infatuated with the idea of individual salvation. This focus on individual salvation as the ultimate goal of Christianity is only a few hundred years old.²³ This focus is dramatically different from that of the early Christians, who centered their energies on creating disciples.²⁴ Creating disciples was not and is not a onetime event. Creating disciples was and is a process that transforms those who were outside of the covenant into lifelong students of the covenant of God, using the word of God to set the boundaries of that covenant and using the spirit of God to put those things into practice. The spirit inculcated those Christians with the word of God²⁵ and these two gifts of God worked together to magnify the gifts of the spirit given to each individual Christian to allow them to live a holy lifestyle. Definitely not perfectly, like our Father or our older brother, but practice it they did.

The reader may ask what is wrong with this change of focus from a lifelong journey to a once in a lifetime event, especially since scripture states that a major part of Jesus' mission here on earth was to let mankind know that their creator and Father was offering salvation to all of mankind? The answer can be explained very simply if you realize that scripture shows our covenant with God is analogous to a marriage covenant. If the focus of the marriage covenant is the wedding ceremony, with its essentially once in a lifetime public acclamation of joining into covenant, rather than having the marriage ceremony be the beginning of a lifelong process of two becoming one, it will almost certainly lead to the marriage becoming nothing more than a hollow shell of what it was designed to be. In this kind of marriage covenant, where all that really matters is saying those wedding vows as a onetime public acclamation, husbands could and do

²³ Viola, Frank and Barna, George, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*, Tyndale House Publishers, 2008 This book details the change in focus in great detail.

²⁴ Viola, Frank and Barna, George, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*, Tyndale House Publishers, 2008

²⁵ John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

justify misusing and even abusing their wives physically, mentally and emotionally because they believe all that mattered in the marriage was that once in a lifetime marriage vow. Once the vow was made, the covenant erroneously became all about the husband because from its conception its focus was incorrect. I believe this happens because these metaphorical, but all too often very real, husbands either ignore or most likely don't know that the purpose of marriage is to have the two become one, which requires a lifetime of work and love and joy. Unfortunately you can see the results of this view of the marriage covenant carried to its logical conclusion in the honor killings carried out under the guise of Islamic marriages.

If a woman's focus is errantly only on the marriage ceremony rather than the process of marriage, it can lead to the belief that the marriage covenant is only about her and not being a helpmate to her husband. This can lead not just to the selfishness of adultery, a sin that YHVH constantly railed against the nation of Israel for because He hated how it tore the covenant apart, but to other practices where the marriage covenant is all about the I. Me-centered relationships are common in the world today because of this world's focus on instant gratification rather than on lifelong processes that yields far greater dividends and satisfaction in the long run. I suppose most eschew the lifelong processes because of the work involved. The focus on salvation as the ultimate goal of Christianity rather holiness is exactly what Bonhoeffer wrote about when he assailed "cheap grace" in *The Cost of Discipleship*. He wrote,

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.²⁶

²⁶ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *The Cost of Discipleship*, from <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/423945-cheap-grace-means-grace-sold-on-the-market-like-cheapjacks>

Grace is a gift of God, but mankind was not created simply to receive gifts, but to use the gifts, all the gifts, given to them by God to achieve holiness. Grace is just one of the tools God is using to forge us into holy instruments. When God presented His written covenant to His called out people, the nation of Israel, what did He want and what did He offer? “But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”²⁷ He wanted them to seek Him so He could have a real, personal relationship with them. What does He want His called out people to be? As the people of Israel prepared to meet God, Moses conveyed God’s message. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth [is] mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”²⁸ Peter echoed that just as God wanted Israel to be holy, He wanted the same thing from the Christian church. “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. Which in time past [were] not a people, but [are] now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”²⁹ Holiness is the mark of those in covenant with God.

What was it about David that God said qualified him to be the king of His chosen people? “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.”³⁰ The People’s New Testament commentary writes about David, “The language does not occur in this form in the Old Testament, but is implied in 1Sa 13:14. This does not imply that David was perfect, but that he sought to do the Lord’s will, instead of showing stubborn disobedience, like Saul. He exhibited nobility of purpose, sought the welfare of the people, and aimed at a purer life.”³¹ Although David had some spectacular failures, his heart would seek God’s will and God’s ways as a matter of routine rather than as a matter of last resort. That is what set David apart as a righteous and holy king of Israel. This is almost certainly what set apart the Christian church from the time of the apostolic era until the late second century.

²⁷ Deut. 4:29

²⁸ Ex. 19:5-6

²⁹ 1 Peter 2:9-10

³⁰ Acts 13:22

³¹ People’s New Testament from e-sword on 1 Sam. 13:14

What is the biblical definition of Holiness?

Most Christians have read they are supposed to be holy as God is holy. They also know that God is perfect and they are not. Far too many Christians abandon the idea that they can be holy because they have confused holiness with perfection. This lack of understanding of some very basic scriptural definitions and dogmas is reminiscent of Paul's writing to the Hebrews. "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."³²

One of the first principles of Christianity is that the bible was given to us by our Father as an instruction manual of life and it contains basic instructions, like $1+1+1=3$. A basic definition of holiness can be found by identifying what constitutes holiness in the Holy Bible. In the Old Testament holy is often used to as a modifier of things, like the temple or the law or a place. In the New Testament holy most often modifies the spirit of God. This has often given rise to the erroneous idea that the Old Covenant was based on the physical and the New Covenant was based on the spiritual. This idea is erroneous because God's covenant has always been the tool a spiritual God has used to have a personal relationship with His physical children. So the covenant has to be both spiritual and physical. The Noadic covenant was physical and spiritual. The Abrahamic covenant was physical and spiritual The Davidic covenant was physical and spiritual. The New Covenant is physical and spiritual. So it should not be surprising that the Old Covenant was physical and spiritual, but that idea does surprise many Christians because of the writings the anti-Nicene fathers, which are at the heart of current Christian dogma, erroneously state the Old Covenant was inferior because it was supposedly physical and designed to punish Israel. The anti-Semitism of the these early church leaders who, along with the Roman emperor Constantine, indelibly changed the face of Christianity during the time frame of the middle of the

³² Heb. 5:11-12

second century A.D. to the middle of the fourth century A.D is detailed in my paper on the book of Galatians³³ and can easily be found by doing a cursory search on the internet.

In the Old covenant, holy described a plethora of physical things in a spiritual context. God created physical reminders of His spiritual covenant for His physical children because we were created to need these reminders. God emphasized these reminders by labeling things as holy under the Old Covenant so the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would maintain their national identity until the Messiah came from their midst. Even with those reminders and the promise of the coming Messiah, many of God's physical children under the Old Covenant did not avail themselves of a personal relationship with God their Father. The need for those physical reminders were not eliminated or even reduced once the Messiah instituted the New Covenant with his own blood. However, their meanings were refocused because of what God had done for us with the sacrifice of His only begotten son.³⁴ The New Testament emphasis is that all of mankind is now under the New Covenant and those who choose to embrace the tenants of that covenant and have personal relationship with God are distinguished not just by following the holy ordinances of God, but will be emblazoned with the sign of the holy spirit.³⁵

As shocking as this may sound to some Christians, according to scripture, adherents of the New Covenant would distinguish themselves as disciples of Jesus the Messiah by their holiness and not their righteousness. Equating holiness with righteousness or perfection is simply unbiblical. A simple word study on the terms righteousness and holiness easily yields the difference between the two, showing that righteous actions are a subset of holy actions. The Hebrew word most often translated as righteous is *tsaddiyq*³⁶ and the Hebrew word *tsēdaqah*³⁷ is most often

³³ Rudd, James, *The Book of Galatians and a New Perspective on Paul*. Available for free at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

³⁴ Col. 2:16-7 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

³⁵ 2 Cor. 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Gal 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Eph. 5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

1 John 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

³⁶ Righteous *tsaddiyq* - The KJV translates Strongs H6662 in the following manner: [righteous](#) (162x), [just](#) (42x), [righteous man](#) (1x), [lawful](#) (1x).

translated as righteousness. The Greek words for righteous and righteousness are *dikaios*³⁸ and *dikaiosynē*.³⁹ Both the Old and New Testament scriptures show that being righteous and doing righteousness revolves around God's law, the Torah.

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.⁴⁰

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.⁴¹

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.⁴²

Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people.⁴³

Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight.⁴⁴

Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.⁴⁵

And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.⁴⁶

³⁷ Righteousness- *tsēdaqah* The KJV translates Strong's H6666 in the following manner: [righteousness](#) (128x), [justice](#) (15x), [right](#) (9x), [righteous acts](#) (3x), [moderately](#) (1x), [righteously](#) (1x).

³⁸ Righteous- *dikaios* G1342 Righteous 41, just 333, right 5

³⁹ Righteousness- *dikaiosynē* The KJV translates Strong's G1343 in the following manner: [righteousness](#) (92x).

⁴⁰ Gen 15:6

⁴¹ Lev. 19:15

⁴² Deut. 6:25

⁴³ Deut. 9:6

⁴⁴ 2 Sam. 22:25

⁴⁵ 2 Chron. 6:23

⁴⁶ 1 kings 3:6

Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness *is* in it.⁴⁷

Thinkest thou this to be right, *that* thou saidst, My righteousness *is* more than God's?⁴⁸

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.⁴⁹

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.⁵⁰

He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.⁵¹

Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.⁵²

When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.⁵³

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁴

Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?⁵⁵

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.⁵⁶

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.⁵⁷

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.⁵⁸

⁴⁷ Job 6:29

⁴⁸ Job 35:2

⁴⁹ Ps 15:2

⁵⁰ Ps 23:3

⁵¹ Ps 33:5

⁵² Ps 45:7

⁵³ Ez. 18:26

⁵⁴ Matt. 5:20

⁵⁵ Rom 2:26

⁵⁶ Rom 6:20

⁵⁷ Rom 14:17

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.⁵⁹

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.⁶⁰

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.⁶¹

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.⁶²

The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.⁶³

Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, and thy law *is* the truth.⁶⁴

In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.⁶⁵

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.⁶⁶

And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.⁶⁷

The Bible, the Torah, the law of God, is the yard stick by which righteousness is measured. When we judge, and every child of God makes judgments,⁶⁸ both good and bad judgments every single day, we must do it the right way if we are to live a righteous life. Righteousness is not

⁵⁸ 1 Cor 15:34

⁵⁹ Gal 2:21

⁶⁰ Gal 3:21

⁶¹ 2 Tim 2:22

⁶² Heb 1:9

⁶³ Ps 103:6

⁶⁴ Ps 119:42

⁶⁵ Jer. 33:15

⁶⁶ Rev 19:11

⁶⁷ Ps 9:8

⁶⁸ 1 Cor. 6:2-4 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church

judging by some feeling about what you should do, but going to the law book to determine what is right and what is wrong. Righteousness is actually a fairly easy biblical concept. It is unrighteous or wrong to murder or steal or covet or generally break the law of God. But righteousness is just the start of the process when we discern how to handle a situation if we are practicing holiness. It is currently fashionable to ask, “What would Jesus do (WWJD).” And this is the crux of how holiness is different from righteousness. Any good judge will determine if the actions taken by the defendant were correct, that is righteous, or incorrect, that is unrighteous, by comparing their actions to the law. If the acts were righteous, then the accused is found innocent. However, if the actions taken were unrighteous you have to look at the circumstances of the case and determine not just that the law was violated, but what the penalty for violating that law should be. Many Christians would say, “Well, that is easy. Go to Romans 6:23.” “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁶⁹ However, as we will examine in detail, Romans 6:23 does not say the penalty for sin is death, but the wages of sin is death. When you sin you have earned the death if all that mattered was the righteousness of the law, but a loving God judges us in His Holiness and not in His righteousness. When you read the entire treatise of Paul’s writings and try to make a coherent whole out of them, as you would with most any other author, rather than grabbing one verse here and one verse there, you will realize he was telling his fellow Christians that righteousness was essential, but it was not even close to being the goal for a Christian.

Holiness

The theological term holiness is usually defined as sanctified or set apart to God. The Hebrew words most often translated as holy or holiness are *qadowsh*⁷⁰ and *Qodesh*⁷¹. The Greek word most often translated as holy, although it is often translated as saints, is *Hagios*.⁷² In the King

⁶⁹ Romans 6:23

⁷⁰ Holy-*qadowsh* H6918 holy 65 holy one 39 saint 12

⁷¹ Holiness and holy *Qodesh* H6944 holy 262 sanctuary 68 holy thing 52 holiness 30 most 44, hallowed 3 consecrated 1

⁷² Holy-*Hagios* (strong’s greek G40) holy 161 times, saints 61 times

James translation, the word holiness comes from a number of related Greek words.⁷³ God our Father, who exemplifies holiness, defines what holy is in his manual of life, the Holy Bible.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.⁷⁴

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.⁷⁵

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.⁷⁶

And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat *any* flesh *that is* torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.⁷⁷

And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat *thereof*, because they *are* holy.⁷⁸

Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.⁷⁹

For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.⁸⁰

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy.⁸¹

Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I *am* the LORD your God.⁸²

⁷³ Greek 3742 *hosiotēs*, *hagiōsynē* G42 3 times, *G 38 Hagiasmos* The KJV translates Strongs G38 in the following manner: holiness (5x), sanctification (5x). G2150 *eusebeia* The KJV translates Strongs G2150 in the following manner: godliness (14x), holiness (1x).

G41 *hagiotēs* From G40; *sanctity* (that is, properly the state): - holiness.

⁷⁴ Gen. 2:3

⁷⁵ Ex. 20:8

⁷⁶ Ex. 31:15

⁷⁷ Ex. 22:31

⁷⁸ Ex. 29:34

⁷⁹ Ex 29:37

⁸⁰ Lev 11:44-5

⁸¹ Lev. 19:2

And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy, and have severed you from *other* people, that ye should be mine.⁸³

They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, *and* the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.⁸⁴

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: *it is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. These *are* the feasts of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. Lev. 23:2-4

Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.⁸⁵

And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.⁸⁶

There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.⁸⁷

Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.⁸⁸

Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.⁸⁹

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.⁹⁰

⁸² Lev. 20:7

⁸³ Lev. 20:26

⁸⁴ Lev. 21:6

⁸⁵ Deu_14:21

⁸⁶ Deu_26:19

⁸⁷ 1Sa_2:2

⁸⁸ Psa_99:5

⁸⁹ Psa_99:9

⁹⁰ Pro_9:10

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.⁹¹

Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.⁹²

But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.⁹³

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.⁹⁴

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?⁹⁵

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.⁹⁶

⁹⁷Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.⁹⁸

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;⁹⁹

There is a reason it is called the Holy Bible rather than the righteous bible. The bible is about holiness because God our Father is holy and He wants us to grow in holiness as we walk with

⁹¹ Isa_6:3

⁹² Eze_22:26

⁹³ Isa_5:16

⁹⁴ 2 Pet. 2:21

⁹⁵ Rev. 6:10

⁹⁶ Rev 15:4

⁹⁷ 2 Cor. 7:1

⁹⁸ 1 The 3:13

⁹⁹ Heb. 3:1

Him We have been commissioned to make disciples of all nations,¹⁰⁰ but we need to make them disciples of the holiness of God and not the righteousness of God. This is not as heretical as it sounds. The Pharisees concentrated on the righteousness of God and Jesus chastised them for it. “But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”¹⁰¹ Although the righteousness of God is wonderful, concentrating on it rather than holiness can actually adversely affect the earnest student of YHVH and the lifestyle He would have us live. “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”¹⁰² Jesus even said that just calling upon his name was not enough to make you a holy disciple. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”¹⁰³ As we will see, the epistles of Paul stress that holiness is a whole.¹⁰⁴

An absolutely essential part of the covenant between God and His called out people has been that they were to be holy. While waiting at the base of Sinai, God told the nation of Israel, “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”¹⁰⁵ Peter tells Christians that they have the same calling the nation of Israel had, to be holy. “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him

¹⁰⁰ Matt. 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:

¹⁰¹ Luke 11:42

¹⁰² Matt. 23:13,15

¹⁰³ Matt. 7:21

¹⁰⁴ Many Christians think of the fruits of the spirit, but this is an incorrect bible concept. The fruit, a singular fruit, is defined as a whole with many parts.

Eph 5:9(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth

Gal. 5:22-3 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

¹⁰⁵ Ex. 19:6

who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”¹⁰⁶ Peter, like Moses, tells those in covenant with God they are to be holy. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”¹⁰⁷ Why does God call out a people to be holy? “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁸ Scripture states we are to be holy so we can serve a holy God, but holiness is not righteousness.

Righteousness and Holiness

Holiness leads to righteousness, but righteousness can actually block the path to holiness because mercy and faith are usually excluded by those who center their life on righteousness rather than holiness. The path of righteousness is littered with those seeking perfection rather than seeking God. Jesus excoriated the scribes and Pharisees for their misguided devotion to righteousness. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”¹⁰⁹ The Pharisees created the Talmud in their quest for perfection, a quest that excluded the holiness of God. This is nothing new. Jesus emphasized holiness on the sermon on the mount, as did the prophets, including Moses in the Torah. Micah wrote, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”¹¹⁰ Hosea wrote, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”¹¹¹

Jesus tells the scribes and Pharisees that they must be righteous and do righteousness, but concentrating only on righteousness is not enough for God’s children to become mature. This

¹⁰⁶ 1 Pet. 2: 9

¹⁰⁷ 1 Pet. 1:15-6

¹⁰⁸ 1 Pet. 2:5

¹⁰⁹ Matt. 23:27

¹¹⁰ Micah 6:8

¹¹¹ Hos. 6:6

does not mean that righteousness has no part in our covenant with God. Christians have heard the phrase “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” They often use it as a way to avoid righteousness and righteous judgment. But that is not how Jesus used it. After showing the mercy the prophets wrote about to a sinner caught in the sin, Jesus said, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”¹¹² Jesus forgave the sin, but he forgave it so the sinner could learn and grow and not repeat that sin. Judgment and mercy must work together for those who follow God in faith. Holiness, at a minimum, requires exercising righteous judgment while showing mercy because we have faith in God and love in our hearts. A tall order, but not too tall for those in covenant with God because they know their Father requires us to be mature in our actions, not perfect. Paul’s writings emphasis the wholeness of God’s holiness. Although far too many interpret Paul’s writings as being anti-nomian, taken in totality, they are simple repeating the message of Jesus and the prophets and what Moses wrote in the Torah.

Peter’s and James’ epistles, along with some of Paul’s writings, like in 1 Corinthians 5 and 11, stress the importance of righteousness for the Christian church because of unrighteous actions going on in the church. If we live an unrighteous lifestyle instead of a righteous lifestyle, which only requires to try to be righteous, we can never live a holy lifestyle. Peter wrote that even in his time people were twisting and turning Paul’s writings to bury the idea that righteousness had anything to do with God’s covenant. Peter wrote, “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”¹¹³ Although scripture states, as shown below, that being righteousness is not enough to be holy, it is impossible to be holy without also practicing righteousness.

And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do

¹¹² John 8:10-11

¹¹³ 2Pet. 3:15-6

all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the LORD your God.¹¹⁴

For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.¹¹⁵

For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.¹¹⁶

The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.¹¹⁷

Acts 3:12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.¹¹⁸

Although Paul's epistles were written to deal with specific problems in specific churches, the theme of his writings is that holiness is an absolute requirement for Christians. "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."¹¹⁹ Righteousness, as defined by scripture, plays an essential role in refining us into holy vessels to be used by God.

In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.¹²⁰

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Numb. 15:39

¹¹⁵ Deut 7:6-9

¹¹⁶ Deut. 14:2

¹¹⁷ Psa_145:17

¹¹⁸ 2 Tim 3:16

¹¹⁹ Hebrews 12:14

¹²⁰ Luke 1:75

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.¹²²

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.¹²³

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.¹²⁴

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.¹²⁵

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.¹²⁶

Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.¹²⁷

Paul's writings don't attack righteousness as legalism. Paul extols the virtues of the law and righteousness over and over again, but he shows how a focus on righteousness rather than holiness will hinder our walk with God in the long run. Even righteousness and judgment and mercy and the help of the holy spirit are not enough to allow us to experience holiness. Faith is the last essential element to allow us to experience the holiness that God intended for us.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report... But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.¹²⁸

¹²¹ Eph 4:24

¹²² Rom 6:22

¹²³ 2 cor 7:1

¹²⁴ 2 Cor. 7:1

¹²⁵ Rom 6:19

¹²⁶ Rev 22:11

¹²⁷ 2 Tim. 1:9

¹²⁸ Heb 11:1-2,6

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.¹²⁹

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.¹³⁰

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.¹³¹

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.¹³²

The early Christian church practiced holiness by showing love and mercy after rendering righteous judgment because they had the love of God in their heart. They did what Jesus would have done, but they did not do it perfectly. But they did not let that slow them down. They had a job to do, a job given to them by a Father who loved them more than they could have ever imagined before they had a personal relationship with Him. That holy love of the early church set the world on fire and changed it for the better. But that began to change less than a century after the crucifixion of the Messiah and that chapter of the church officially closed with the council of Nicaea. At least for now.

Dramatic Changes in the Christian Church

The Nicene Creed of the Catholic Church stressed righteousness as determined by a synod of church leaders over holiness. That righteousness is expressed as the dogma of the Catholic Church, which became their talmud of traditions, a talmud based not only on their mysteries of God, but a mysterious God. The vast majority of Protestantism rebelled against this kind of false talmudic legalistic righteousness. They preached this kind of talmudic legalism superseded and supplanted God's will. Because scripture supposedly was the foundation of this kind of legalism, they preached the superiority of the spirit and abandoned the pretext of having the Holy Bible be their manual of life while shouting *Solo Scriptorium* (Scripture Only) from the rooftops, which has led to Bonhoeffer's cheap grace. This is exemplified in what is called the third wave

¹²⁹ Gal. 5:5

¹³⁰ Heb 11:7

¹³¹ Gal 3:14

¹³² James 2:26

movement today. People want to experience the holy spirit on their terms which often leads to the abandonment of holiness.

The current research of what has been called a new perspective on Paul by authors such as E.P. Sanders, N.T. Wright and James Dunn combine to show the early church did not put up these artificial barriers, but instead used the spirit to discern what holiness was from the scriptures. The Ten Commandments were still commandments under any covenant of God, but the spirit was essential in determine the grey areas in-between, which it had always been for those in covenant with God. The New Covenant as taught by Jesus¹³³ and re-emphasized by Paul did stress the spirit over the law because the Jews denigrated the role of the spirit with their Talmudic interpretations of the law, but this teaching must be looked at in context. The apostolic writers, taken as a whole, reveal how the early church changed the world by leading it to the holiness of YHVH using the law and the spirit in unison.

Christianity embraces the Mysteries

Eighth Day Sabbath

Most Christians have heard of the Nicene Creed and may even know that its origin is from the first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church in 325 A.D. This council was run by Constantine, who had not even declared himself to be a Christian at that point in his life. The main purpose of this conclave was to enshrine Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. And Constantine's desire was to use Christianity to help control his empire. He succeeded by forcing many political compromises on theological issues.

Some Christians may know the council of Nicaea officially changed the day of the Sabbath from the 7th day to the 8th day because, according to Catholic doctrine, the eighth day comes after the 7th day, therefore it is supposedly superior because it came later, supposedly just as the New Covenant came after the Old Covenant and was thus superior. Christians may know this change was allowed because part of Catholic dogma or teaching states that the pope has the right to

¹³³ The sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7 shows how the law and spirit were supposed to work together to eliminate talmuds, rather they be Jewish or Christian, but it did not eliminate the law as the foundation of a holy life.

change just about anything related to the worship of God. The teaching that changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the eighth day was supposedly based on a premise that Jesus' teaching superseded and came after the Old Covenant, as the Gnostic *Epistle of Barnabas* explains. "It is not these sabbaths of the present age that I find acceptable, but the one of my own appointment: the one that, after I have set all things at rest, is to usher in the Eighth Day, the commencement of a new world.' (And we too rejoice in celebrating the Eighth Day; because that was when Jesus rose from the dead, and showed Himself again, and ascended into heaven.)"¹³⁴ Theological double speak enshrines the first day of the week as the eighth day of a seven day week. However, this theological construct is nothing compared to why Protestants observe Sabbath on the "eighth day."

Protestants broke away from the Catholic Church with the battle cry of *solo scriptorium* or scripture only, suggesting they would abandon papal traditions that were either un-biblical or extra-biblical. But the Protestants could not embrace a seventh day Sabbath because it was too Jewish, with the anti-Semitic writings of Calvin and Luther clearly expressing this viewpoint.¹³⁵ Thus they rejected the seventh day Sabbath under the guise of rejecting legalism. These Protestant reformers instituted the same Catholic legalism of the eighth day Sabbath supposedly based upon 4 scriptures rather than papal authority.¹³⁶ However, even the Catholic Church scoffs at the idea that these 4 verses support a change of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the eighth/first day of the week. Yet the vast majority of Protestants continue to observe a sabbath on the eighth day of a seven day week. A Sunday Sabbath is not supported by scripture and this author feels this practice hinders a Christian's walk with God because it demonstrates a belief that mankind knows what is best for us no matter what manual of life, the Holy states.

As a Christian who worships God on Sunday you may ask yourself what do you mean when you write that Sunday the eighth day? How can you have eight days in a seven day week? It is simply

¹³⁴ *Epistle of Barnabas*, 15. Staniforth, Maxwell, trans. From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabbath_in_Christianity#cite_note-11

¹³⁵ To see this in more detail, you can download *The book of Galatians and a New Perspective on Paul* from www.KeepersOfTheWay.org

¹³⁶ A detailed study of how these four scriptures are misused can be found in *Jesus the True Passover* by James Rudd, available for free at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>.

a mystery that has transformed the first day of week into the eighth. Of course the rigid enforcement of the eighth day as the Sabbath in the Catholic Church was put off for two generations after Nicaea because the church had other mysteries to enforce that were more important than the eighth day. And during that time there was a huge resurgence of Christians observing a 7th day Sabbath. But the Catholic Church would come back to persecute those who would not embrace the “superiority” of the eighth day Sabbath and by 400 A.D. Christians who observed the 7th day Sabbath were either murdered, migrated out of the reach of the Catholic church or went underground.

Wiccan holydays substituted for Jewish holydays

Passover, another one of those “dreadful Jewish practices,” like the 7th day Sabbath, was also officially replaced by Easter at the council of Nicaea.¹³⁷ Eusebius, Emperor Constantine’s biographer, wrote how the church purged itself of many Jewish practices at this time.¹³⁸ This hatred of the Jews and anything Jewish because they supposedly killed Jesus the Messiah led the council of Nicaea to declare that if the Jews celebrated Passover on the Sunday that would become Easter Sunday, then Easter, which at that time was considered keeping Passover on resurrection Sunday, was postponed for a week because Christians should not and would not want to be celebrating the same time the Jews were celebrating. Compare this teaching to the early Christian Church’s teachings. “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”¹³⁹ The Jewish people were labeled as the murderers of the Messiah by the Catholic Church at the council of Nicaea, ignoring all of the New Testament scriptures about Jesus making this sacrifice of his own free will at the behest of his Father.¹⁴⁰ The council of Nicaea ignored Jesus’

¹³⁷ At the time of the council of Nicaea Easter had not been officially adopted. What was adopted was a Sunday Passover rather than a Passover on the 14th of Nisan. An in-depth examination of this issue can be found in Possible Origins of Easter by James Rudd at <http://>

¹³⁸ This is detailed in Jesus, the True Passover, which can be found at <http://www.KeeperOfTheWay.org>

¹³⁹ Col. 3:10-1

¹⁴⁰ Matt. 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

admonition to forgive those who crucified him because they did not know what they were doing.¹⁴¹ And by doing so, they created a wall of separation between themselves and the Jews that was far greater than the Jews ever practiced against the gentiles before the coming of the Messiah.

The Christian church went from being a Jewish sect at its origin to welcoming all into the brotherhood and sisterhood of Christ by 50 AD. Of course there were some Jewish Christians who never accepted this teaching,¹⁴² but by and large the mainly Jewish Christian church accepted the gentiles into fellowship with them. The rejection of the Jewish followers of Yashua, starting in the mid-second century A.D and made official at the council of Nicaea had a profound effect on the church's outlook, actions and holiness. The belief that the church had the power to exclude a large chunk of humanity from being able to participate in the New Covenant of God was important in how the Christian church changed, but by far and away the most important change made at Nicaea was the introduction of a mysterious God in the form of a trinity that was really one.

The Mystery of Math-The Trinity and the Nature of Jesus

Theologians like to use big words and hide behind mysteries. What is the nature of God? A mysterious trinity that no one can understand. One in three and three in one. Almost like the creed of the musketeers. The trinity is often referred to by theologians as a mystery, wrapped inside a riddle, inside an enigma. Why? Because the trinity was the political compromise reached at the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. at the expense of the monotheistic Christians, known as Arians, and not because the apostles and the early church taught it. The trinity is an extra-biblical concept.¹⁴³ However, scholars have sold this concept of God as a trinity to Christians for

John 10:17-18 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

¹⁴¹ Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

¹⁴² This phenomenon is covered in detail in my paper *Possible Origins of Easter*, which can be found at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

¹⁴³ The issue of the trinity is beyond the scope of this book, but the scriptures that list doing things in the name of the Father, Son and holy spirit can be numbered on one hand whereas there are dozens of scriptures delineated the father

millennia and to defy the orthodoxy of the trinity is to invite the label of being un-Christian. A history of how the trinity is Christianity's self-inflicted wound can be found in Buzzard's and Schoenheit et al's work.¹⁴⁴

The trinity is an interesting Mathematical Concept

$$1+1+1=1$$

Such mathematics may seem Orwellian in nature. In George Orwell's *1984*, the Party controls thought with doublethink. Doublethink is tool that forces it adherents to actually believe $2+2=5$. The factually correct answer does not matter to the Party as long as you give the pre-approved answer to the question. However, doublethink is design not just to force you to give the pre-approved answer, but to exclude the possibility of you even thinking there might be another answer. There is no doubt the introduction of the trinity was a very early example of doublethink, but most people did not realize it. Why? Let's look at another mathematical model to demonstrate how this "proof" works.

Mathematical proof

$$A=1, B=1, \text{ thus } A=B$$

We can multiply both sides by a and since $a=b$

$$A \times A = A \times B$$

we can substitute and get the equation

$$A^2 = AB$$

Subtract B^2 from both sides

$$A^2 - B^2 = AB - B^2$$

Factor both sides

$$(A-B)(A+B) = B(A-B)$$

Divide by $(A-B)$

$$A+B=B$$

from the son from the holy spirit. Although the exact nature of the godhead is beyond the scope of this paper, it appears obvious from the historical record that the early church did not embrace a trinitarian god.

¹⁴⁴ Buzzard, Anthony, and Hunting, Charles F., *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's self-inflicted wound*, International Scholars Publications, 1998. Buzzard, Anthony, *Jesus was not a Trinitarian*, Restoration Fellowship, 2007. Schoenheit, John W., Graeser, Mark H., and Lynn, John A, *One God and One Lord: Reconsidering the Cornerstone of the Christian Faith*, 2010

Observing that $A=B$

$B+B=B$

Therefore you can combine terms and have the result of

$2B=B$

Divide both sides by B . The equation yields the answer

$2=1$

Of course there is a trick to this “proof.” I have violated one of the basic principles of mathematics to “prove” $1=2$. If you know the trick, you would scoff at this proof. The trick is that I divided by zero, which is not allowed under the rules of mathematics, but I disguised this trick in a flurry of equations, much like the flurry around the nature God at the Council of Nicaea. However, if you don’t know the trick because you are not familiar with mathematics it can be used to manipulate you into believing it is true, just as with *1984*’s doublethink. You may simply accept that $1+1+1=3$ because you allow someone else’s logic to override your own as we did when we supposedly proved in the equation above that $1=2$. This is the basis of the mystery referred to as the trinity, where $1+1+1=1$. If you can be tricked into believing our Father, YHVH, is just another name for a mysterious, wrathful god like Zeus or Jupiter or Chronos or Brahman or Shiva or Vishnu or Baal or Dagon, you might be fooled into believing you can’t have a real personal relationship with Him, just like you could never have with these fake gods. Once our Father becomes a wrathful mystery hidden inside an enigma wrapped riddle, the idea of having a personal relationship with Him also becomes a mystery and most Christians even stop trying. That is why many evangelical only pray to and talk about Jesus the Christ, the son of God and exclude the “mean” God of the Old Testament, the supposed Father portion of the triune. The Catholic Church takes this one step further by having its adherents pray to Mary, not only because she is supposedly more understanding of the human condition than her son Jesus, but because Jesus supposedly would not turn down the request of his mother. The Catholic and Protestant practice of bypassing communication with the Father to supposedly get a more favorable hearing of the request shows they view YHVH, the creator of all things, as an unreasonable and unapproachable God. Yet if Jesus is actually the Father in some way since it is three in one, as the trinity suggests, then Jesus would also have to be the supposedly mean God of the Old Testament. Thus the Jesus the son should be just as approachable as YHVH the Father, yet He is not in the vast majority of Christian thought because he is the God who died for

us. Yet Jesus could not really die since he was God and God resurrected him. It is all so confusing with a triune god. Just as its designers apparently envisioned.

The council of Nicaea not only mandated that God the Father's nature was a mystery, wrapped inside a riddle, inside an enigma because that is the only way to explain $1+1+1=1$, but the nature of Jesus was also defined to be 100% god and 100% man. In normal mathematics with bounded rules, $100\%=1$. So the Nicene nature of Jesus states that $1+1=1$. Paul wrote, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."¹⁴⁵ Paul wrote that we could have an understanding of God and His ways, although we would not understand it perfectly. Paul didn't write that everything about following Jesus was a mystery, where $1+1+1=3$ and $1+1=2$, yet as the Christian church grew into the universal or Catholic Church, holiness was swallowed into these mysteries.

Does it really matter if the nature of God the Father and Jesus the Christ are a mystery? I believe for the early church it mattered immensely. Paul wrote about this relationship. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."¹⁴⁶ In Eph. 4:6 Paul wrote, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."¹⁴⁷ YHVH is the creator and sustainer of all things, the only true god, but first and foremost, he is our father. That is how He defines Himself to mankind, the children He created in His image. And, as we will examine in detail, Jesus the Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant who ratified that covenant with his own blood. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."¹⁴⁸ To hide our Father as a wrathful god who demands a human sacrifice to satiate Himself and to hide our older brother as somehow not really being human as we are human is to put a wall between us and them which will impede the holy spirit's work of helping us become holy and comforting us when we are not perfect.

Scripture shows the early church thought of YHVH as their Father, as shown below.

¹⁴⁵ 1 Cor 13:12

¹⁴⁶ 1 Cor. 8:6

¹⁴⁷ Eph 4:6

¹⁴⁸ 1 Tim. 2:5

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.¹⁴⁹

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.¹⁵⁰

The early church took their cue on how to approach YHVH from Jesus the Christ, their older brother, lord and master. “And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”¹⁵¹ Jesus did not approach YHVH as a God whose orders had to be followed without question and without input. He knew the will of God better than anyone. Jesus knew that Isaiah wrote of YHVH, the Father of all, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”¹⁵² And when Jesus was reasoning together with God about what he needed to do, Jesus approached the creator of all things as his loving Father who cared about him, not as an omnipotent potentate who only cared about rules and results. He prayed to his Father, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”¹⁵³ And I believe that the church that changed the world from 50 into the 200’s A.D. also approached their creator and sustainer as a loving father and not a wrathful god who demands that penalties are paid to Him to supposedly satiate His nearly insatiable wrath as did the imaginary pagan gods.

Another mystery that must have changed the church and its relationship with God the Father was the mystery of transubstantiation, which again depends upon a supposedly wrathful God trying to find some way to communicate with His supposedly fallen children.

The Eucharist

The Eucharist is a distinctly Catholic and Orthodox view of what the symbols of wine and bread given at The Last Supper are and what they represent. These churches teach that during, “the

¹⁴⁹ Rom. 8:15

¹⁵⁰ Gal. 4:6

¹⁵¹ Mark 14:36

¹⁵² Is. 1:18

¹⁵³ Matt. 26:42

mass, priests allegedly have the power to supernaturally turn the bread and wine into the actual and literal body and blood of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁴ This places great importance on the role of the priests, who have supposedly been granted this supernatural power by having extra amounts of the holy spirit that the laity does not possess. Although the role of the Levitical priesthood was never supposed to place them between man and God, far too often both the Israelites and the priesthood itself placed those priests of YHVH in that role. The prophets show the role of the priesthood was to facilitate a relationship between God and mankind, not to act as an intermediary. The idea that God wanted anyone to stand between Him and His children should have been permanently put to rest when the God rent the veil of the temple and gave access to the holy of holies to everyone, especially the gentiles, all the time by the sacrifice of God’s only begotten son. However, preaching or teaching that the role of an intercessor or mediator is to lead someone to God rather than run interference with God, which will be covered in detail later, would limit the power of the priest to advisor rather than emissary of God. This change from a priesthood of believers to a church run by a few priests who supposedly possessed mystical powers was another major change from the apostolic church. It should be obvious that teaching believers that they do not have direct access to God would have a tendency to have people limit their own access and that obviously will affect the growth of holiness in an individual.

The council of Trent summarized the Catholic belief of transubstantiation performed only by the priesthood. “Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.”¹⁵⁵ This statement was made in large part to dispute Martin Luther, who rejected the process of transubstantiation, as does Protestantism today. Yet over a billion Christians still believe that transubstantiation is a vital part of their relationship with God.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, Rick, *Understanding Roman Catholicism*, 1995, Chick Publication, Ontario, CA pp. 83-88

¹⁵⁵ Jones, p. 85

Transubstantiation has a relationship with the symbols of bread and wine at the Last Supper, but its origin was apparently derived from verses 53 and 54 of the sixth chapter of gospel of John.¹⁵⁶ When the sixth chapter of John is taken out of context, as far too many Christians do with far too many scriptures, it might be possible to believe and teach Jesus is instructing his disciples to perform a mysterious type of cannibalism where people were supposed to eat his flesh and drink his blood. However, taken in context and without being shrouded in mystery, this mystical teaching can easily be seen to be in error. John writes in his gospel:

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst... And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven...I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the

¹⁵⁶ John 6:53-4 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had hear this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?¹⁵⁷

In verse 40 Jesus said that if you believe in him, you will have eternal life. This was a statement of fact. However, his later statement about eating his body and drinking his blood was made while he was still alive, so he surely was not suggesting his literal body to be eaten then since he still had to fulfill his earthly mission that did not end until his death on the cross. Therefore eating his flesh and drinking his blood must be a metaphor, just as the following sayings of Jesus are metaphors.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.¹⁵⁸

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I am.¹⁵⁹

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.¹⁶⁰

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.¹⁶¹

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.¹⁶²

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.¹⁶³

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.¹⁶⁴

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.¹⁶⁵

Jesus also often spoke in figurative terms, as shown below.

Ye are the salt of the earth.¹⁶⁶

Ye are the light of the world.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁷ John 6:33-5, 40-1, 48-60

¹⁵⁸ John 8:12

¹⁵⁹ John 8:58

¹⁶⁰ John 9:5

¹⁶¹ John 10:7

¹⁶² John 10:11

¹⁶³ John 11:25

¹⁶⁴ John 14:6

¹⁶⁵ John 15:1

¹⁶⁶ Matt. 5:13

¹⁶⁷ Matt. 5:14

Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.¹⁶⁸

Even in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, the disciples really thought Jesus was referring to literal bread when he was talking about the leaven of the Pharisees.¹⁶⁹ It was only after Jesus reminded the disciples about the loaves and fishes that they realized, “how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”¹⁷⁰ Since even the disciples sometimes misunderstood the metaphorical teachings of Jesus, it is not surprising the Christians who do not read bible would also misunderstand those metaphorical teachings, especially when their leaders manipulated those teachings to give themselves more power, just as the Pharisees did. However, Christianity, both Protestants and Catholics, agree that Luke 22:20 and I Corinthians 11:25, where Jesus teaches that the cup of wine is his blood shed for the creation of the new covenant, are figurative. So why do the Catholics and the Orthodox Church teach they are eating the body and drinking blood of the Messiah during their communion service? I contend this teaching is so important in these churches because it adds a veil of mystery while simultaneously dismissing the teachings of the Old Testament under the veil of dispensationalism.

God ordered his called out people not to consume blood, going clear back to the time of Noah. “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”¹⁷¹ As part of the Old Covenant God reiterated, “No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it

¹⁶⁸ Matt. 16:6

¹⁶⁹ Matt. 16:7-11

¹⁷⁰ Matt. 16:12

¹⁷¹ Gen. 9:4

shall be cut off.”¹⁷² Yet the Catholic and Orthodox churches teach its parishioners must constantly drink blood to stay in communion with God.

In defining what a holy people should be doing while they walk with God, God even limited the kinds of animals that humans should eat in Lev. 11 and Deut. 14. Even Protestant ministers, such as Joel Osteen, have embraced these biblical food laws.¹⁷³ However, Christianity generally ignores these laws because of their erroneous interpretation of Acts 10.

The events of the tenth chapter of Acts occurred years after the death of Jesus. When God sends Peter a dream to kill and eat unclean foods, Peter answers, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.”¹⁷⁴ Again, as is common in the New Testament, a disciple misunderstands a figurative message of God. Peter heard, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.”¹⁷⁵ It was at this time that the men sent by Cornelius the Centurion, because of a vision sent to Cornelius by God, arrived. When Peter followed God’s order to go see Cornelius, he said, “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”¹⁷⁶ Scripture interprets itself. The vision of Acts 10 had nothing to do with what kind of food we should eat or not eat, outside of the fact that years after the death of Jesus the apostles were still not eating foods labeled as unclean in scripture because they were leading a holy lifestyle. Therefore, God not only ordained that His called out people should not eat blood, but His holy people were to abstain from certain kinds of meats and these

¹⁷² Lev. 17:12-4

¹⁷³ <http://www.christianforums.com/t7271170>

¹⁷⁴ Acts 10:14

¹⁷⁵ Acts 10:15-6

¹⁷⁶ Acts 10:28, 35-6

prohibitions have not been changed in scripture. Yet many Christians believe God has ordered them to eat a human being and drink his blood at a weekly worship services. Consciously doing exactly the opposite of what God ordered a holy people to do will obviously affect their holiness before God, even if they believe they are somehow mysteriously performing a holy act when they defy God's commands.

Besides violating the ordinance against consuming blood, the ritual of transubstantiation also appears to require the sacrifice of Jesus every week. Every time a priest blesses the wine and bread at the mass, Jesus is sacrificed again as portions of him are transubstantiated and consumed. However, Paul states, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."¹⁷⁷ Although those who believe in transubstantiation would argue the point, it appears that their ceremony requires Christ be sacrificed anew every week, again something that scripture shows to be incorrect. The Protestant practice of partaking of the symbols on a regular basis is very different because they are memorializing the sacrifice of Jesus, not performing it over and over again, but even this tradition has doubtful origins. But at least they are claiming that a cannibalistic ritual where human flesh and blood are consumed is holy.

Jesus was The Christ, The Messiah, and as such he was the light of the world and the true vine and the good shepherd. All of these metaphorical roles allowed Jesus to bring life and holiness to those who believed in his message and accepted that the Father had sent Jesus to show the Father's love. That is why Jesus said when we partake of the symbols of the wine and the bread, we do it in remembrance of him.¹⁷⁸ This author rejects the entire premise of transubstantiation and the Eucharist as unscriptural not just because of the scriptures that forbid the eating of blood, but also because it requires a priest to act as intermediary between God and His called out people, something that was never required under any covenant between God and His physical children. Putting another mystery between God and His people, which is what transubstantiation does, as well as requiring men to stand between God and His people, unsurprisingly appears to have

¹⁷⁷ Heb. 9:7

¹⁷⁸ 1 Cor. 11:25

continued the process of draining holiness from the early church because it called the profane holy.¹⁷⁹

Traditions

Washings and offerings

Christianity is filled with traditions just as is Judaism and Islam. Traditions are neither good nor bad by themselves. The Rudd family has many traditions that we use to bring us closer together and to maintain order. But all Christians know that traditions can block the path to God and His ways according to Jesus. Jesus laid waste to the traditions of the scribes and the Pharisees when they asked him, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is* a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. *Ye* hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.”¹⁸⁰

There is nothing wrong with washing your hands before you eat. It is a good and sanitary practice and I would consider it a good tradition. However, as part of the imaginary oral law supposedly given to Moses by God at the same time he was given the Torah, there were

¹⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 11:13-15 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Is. 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Ez. 44:23 And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

¹⁸⁰ Matthew 15:2-9

supposedly other ordinances, including these washings, which were not written in the Torah. The Pharisees did these washings, “professedly for the sake of cleanliness. So far it was well. But they also made it a matter of superstition. They regarded external purity as of much more importance than the purity of the heart. They had many foolish rules about it respecting the quantity of water that was to be used, the way in which it should be applied, the number of times it should be changed, the number of those that might wash at a time, etc. Our Saviour did not think it proper to regard these rules, and this was the reason why they “found fault” with him.”¹⁸¹

Jesus contrasted the Jewish teaching of ritual cleanliness with their teaching that it was supposedly more important to “do the work of God” by leaving your money to the church (in their case the temple) rather than financially helping your own parents when they were in need. These kinds of actions were condemned when Jesus contrasted the sheep and goats in Matthew 25. But Pharisaic tradition even allowed children to ignore needy parents supposedly in the name of God.¹⁸² And many Christian religions continue this tradition today by teaching it is more important to pay your tithes and offerings that further the work of the church, which supposedly furthers the work of God, then to take care of the needy, even the needy in your own household. There is nothing wrong with offerings or tithes. They are good things which allow us to share God’s blessings with others. But we are supposed to use our Christian judgment to determine how to share God’s blessings with others and not let church tradition render that judgment mute least we take the chance of letting tradition make void the commandments of God and leave us standing with the goats, asking, “Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?”¹⁸³ Only to be answered, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.”¹⁸⁴ It appears fairly obvious from the gospel that Jesus’ teachings agree with Paul’s writings that show the apostolic

¹⁸¹ Barnes notes on Matthew 15:2 from e-sword.

¹⁸² Mark 7:9-13 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

¹⁸³ Matt 25: 44

¹⁸⁴ Matt. 25:45

Christian Church exercised that judgment on an individual and congregational basis rather than on a corporate basis and the apostles praised them for this.

Grace

There but for the grace of God go I. A traditional saying with great power that I fully embrace as a good tradition. But the traditional meaning of grace in the Christian church today does not match the scriptural definition that the early church would have used and followed. Grace is translated from the Greek word *charis*, which is Strong's G5463. It is defined as, "*graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude): - acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious).*"¹⁸⁵ Outside of the implied theological definitions upon which Christian dogma depends, *charis* is best translated as a gift. There are many kinds of gifts in this world, from a birthday gift to the gift of a good spouse to the gift of holy and healthy children to the gift of a satisfying job. Gifts are given for many purposes and have many uses, but what separates gifts from wages is that you have earned the wages, but a gift is given. And the early church approached God the Father's *charis* to them as a loving gift, not some mystical incantation of unmerited pardon without which God could not stand to be on the same planet with us.

The standard definition of grace throughout the Christian world today is very succinctly stated on the web site <http://www.graceimpact.org/GHBM1/04Grace.html>.

“GRACE: Is The Unmerited Favor of God. ‘Grace’ is so much of a characteristic of God (like His love), that human words do not adequately express its meaning.”¹⁸⁶

The standard definition of grace in Christianity today is something so big, so otherworldly, that we just can't express it. In other words, it is a mystery. The current Christian explanation of why grace is unmerited pardon is wrapped up in an eisegesis of Romans 6:23 which states, 'For the

¹⁸⁵ Strong's G5463

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.graceimpact.org/GHBM1/04Grace.html>.

wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁸⁷ As graceimpact writes, “Some have defined ‘Grace’ as “*Undeserved Mercy*”, and this is true. However, all mercy is undeserved; that's the meaning of mercy. **GRACE** is more than mercy. Mercy gets a criminal off the hook and out of jail, but **GRACE** pays the debt of the criminal and sets him free to enjoy the good life.”¹⁸⁸ Is this scriptural and is this true?

Let's look a little deeper at Romans 6:23. “For the wages (*opsōnion*) of sin *is* death; but the gift (*charisma*) of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁸⁹ The Greek word *opsōnion* means, “*rations* for a soldier, that is, (by extension) his *stipend* or *pay*.”¹⁹⁰ Paul is comparing what you earn to what God gives as a gift. Wages are what we have earned. They are not a penalty. The word penalty is not found in the King James translation of scripture. Even in a modern translation like the NIV, penalty is only found three times in the New Testament. In Luke 23:22 it was used to explain why Pilate objected to killing Jesus.¹⁹¹ In Romans 1:27¹⁹² the Greek word normally translated as recompense, which is something that you paid, was translated as penalty. And in Galatians 5:10 the NIV translators rendered a Greek word for judgment or decision as penalty.¹⁹³

At the core of Christian theology, which is dependent upon a wrathful God who can only forgive us with the otherworldly grace or unmerited pardon, is the idea that Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. Is this accurate and is this scriptural? Paul wrote in Galatians, “For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man

¹⁸⁷ Romans 6:13

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.graceimpact.org/GHBM1/04Grace.html>

¹⁸⁹ Romans 6:23

¹⁹⁰ Strong's G3800

¹⁹¹ Luke 23:22 NIV For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty (*thanatos*). Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.”
G2288 *thanatos* The death of the body

¹⁹² Rom. 1:27 NIV In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

¹⁹³ Gal 5:10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty (*krima*). G2917 *Krima*- A decree or judgment

soweth, that shall he also reap.”¹⁹⁴ Paul writes that we will receive the payment we are owed for defying God and His ways of life. In the midst of Jeremiah’s prophecy about the New Covenant, he wrote, “But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.”¹⁹⁵ God, through one of his mightiest prophets, agrees with Paul that we die for our own sins. Current Christian teaching or dogma states these verses don’t really mean what they plainly say. Current Christian dogma states that man is actually in an evil or fallen state and that only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross can pay the penalty for that evil. Since the early church knew scripture and likely took scripture in context because there were no verse and chapter division, they would have far more easily seen that Jeremiah 31 and Galatians 6 agree with Romans 6:23. These verses taken together and in context show that God will pay the wages to whom they are owed. Any employer is going to pay the wages that His employees have earned, so of course God will. But completely separated from those wages, God, as a loving father, also wants to give gifts to his children.

The Rudd family pays our children an allowance for doing household chores. Not just keeping their room clean, but doing the laundry, doing the yard work, sweeping and mopping the house, and when my twins turn 13, doing the doing dishes (too much chance of breakage before then). This is a bargain we have made with them to teach them the value of work and money. If they come up short on their jobs, which they very rarely do, they may well lose some of those wages. When we moved from the east coast to Colorado all three boys have helped immensely. My wife and I not only wanted to, but gave them gifts for their help. They had already done the work, so these gifts are not payments. We gave these gifts because our hearts are gay with pride and love because of whom our boys are, who they are becoming and the fruit they are bearing.

The fruit that mankind is supposed to bear in God’s plan is shown by examining the tipping point of this plan, the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ. As will be shown, this sacrifice by a loving father of his only begotten son was essential to the plan of God and was ordained from the beginning of

¹⁹⁴ Gal. 6:5-7

¹⁹⁵ Jer. 31:30

this age.¹⁹⁶ As will be shown, this sacrifice was foreshadowed by the father of the faithful, Abraham, with his only begotten son, Isaac. But the sacrifice of Jesus was not done to pay the penalty for your or my sins. The idea of Jesus paying the penalty for ours sins is yet another mystery embraced by the current Christian church because the idea of paying a penalty to God is foreign to scripture. This mystery ignores how the Old Covenant is replete with the command that human sacrifices to the true God of creation were forbidden because God clearly states that everyone will be paid the wages of what they have sown. So why doesn't God pay the wages of death when we break His law? Why did He allow Adam and Eve to continue to live when they had earned the wages of death?

To explain how God pays wages and gives gifts we must look at how wages are defined in scripture and how these wages are different than a penalty. A wage is something you have earned, but a penalty is something you pay to someone else for the damage you inflicted by doing something wrong. The nation of Israel violated God's laws numerous times and they were punished for it, but this punishment was what they had earned. It was not a penalty they had to pay to God. God allowed and even sometimes facilitated the paying of this wage, but these punishments were not done to satiate God with some kind of payment or penalty. The idea of a penalty presupposes and depends upon a vengeful God, but scripture and the holy spirit reveal a loving Father who would rather show mercy, as He did with Adam and Eve, but will punish us by letting us receive the payment we are owed for doing unrighteousness if it will teach us a lesson to help us become more holy.

If you jump off a three story building, you will likely pay for it with physical injury. You have earned the wages of your stupidity. However, you might get lucky and not get hurt or only break a leg. You have avoided being paid, either in part or in full, for your stupidity. Will you receive a wage or pay a penalty for driving 90 miles an hour on the freeway? You will receive your wages by wear and tear on your car and the years you take off the life of your loving wife. If you have an accident because you were driving at an unsafe speed, you will receive the wages of a damaged car and perhaps even with the loss of life. However, if a police man pulls you over for

¹⁹⁶ Rev. 13: 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

violating the speed limit, you will have to pay the wages of increased insurance cost and perhaps loss of the privilege to drive, but you will also pay a penalty in the form of a fine to the aggrieved government for violating its laws. However, if no policeman pulls you over, there is no penalty to be paid.

The idea that penalties must be paid to an authority when a law is broken is not how scripture defines cause and effect of violating the ordinances of scripture. If we break God's laws by eating or drinking too much, we have earned our expanded gut that slows us down and impedes our health. But God does not want us to pay Him an additional penalty for breaking His laws because He feels aggrieved the same way Zeus or Baal supposed did. Those kinds of penalties were required by the false pagan gods of their followers. However, YHVH has told us when we break His laws, we will be hurt and the hurt is what we have earned, not what He inflicts upon us to make Him feel better. YHVH's laws are like the laws of thermodynamics. These laws simply inform you what will happen when an action is taken. The result of your actions is as simple as for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

But didn't God order the nation of Israel to perform physical sacrifices? And doesn't He require sacrifices from His church today? The answer to both questions is yes, but are these sacrifices supposed to be a penalty? Scripture clearly shows the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant were not penalties to satiate a wrathful god. They were physical reminders for physical beings to ask for forgiveness to renew a personal relationship. God said over and over again that He would rather not have his covenant people be paid the wages for their sins because if they were leading a holy lifestyle, He could instead show them mercy. A sampling of these scriptures are listed below.

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.¹⁹⁷

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.¹⁹⁸

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Psa 40:6

¹⁹⁸ Psa 51:16

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.²⁰⁰

But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.²⁰¹

But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.²⁰²

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.²⁰³

Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law;²⁰⁴

The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.²⁰⁵

The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.²⁰⁶

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.²⁰⁷

The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.²⁰⁸

God set laws in motion when He created the physical universe. He describes the blessing that would come if these laws were obeyed and the cursings that would result if they were not. But these were not arbitrary actions of a capricious God. They were and are the physical reality for physical beings put in place by a spiritual God. Just as the owner's manual of a car informs the driver that they need to know more than just to fill up the car with gasoline if they want to go someplace, God's owner's manual of life informs mankind what they need to do to perform optimally.

¹⁹⁹ Jer 7:22

²⁰⁰ Hos 6:6

²⁰¹ Mat 9:13

²⁰² Mat 12:7

²⁰³ Heb 10:5

²⁰⁴ Heb 10:8

²⁰⁵ Psa 51:17

²⁰⁶ Psa 34:18

²⁰⁷ Isa 57:15

²⁰⁸ Psa 51:17

An owner's manual also informs drivers if they don't change the oil and other fluids the car will break down and no longer be useful. The owner's manual list the maintenance that needs to be performed if the car is to serve its purpose as well as it should. Exactly when the car will break down if this maintenance is not performed in violation of "the laws" of the owner's manual varies from car to car, but they will all break if the driver does not follow the laws that govern the physical car. A driver might be ignorant of the rules listed in the owner's manual or they might believe those rules don't apply to their car. But what the driver believes does not change what happens to the car if the owner's manual is ignored The longer the manual is ignored, the worse the performance of the vehicle until it is no longer useful.

The laws governing physical human beings are no more or less capricious than the laws governing the operations of a motor vehicle or governing gravity. As a part of this law, God describes how He would circumcise the hearts of Israel if they followed His commandments, but if they turned away from God things would go badly. Why is that? God told Israel, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."²⁰⁹ This is simply the law of life from the creator of life. But like any good father, YHVH wants us to make the right choices not just to avoid injuring ourselves, but so we can grow up to be sons and daughters He is proud of. The wages we must pay for violating God's law are there to help the physical children of a spiritual God become holy. These wages are not a payment to satiate the wrath of God who supposedly cannot forgive the children He loves without being paid a penalty.

Penalties are for false Gods. Forgiveness is the gift the true God gives to His children so they can continue to grow and mature. Any good human father knows punishment for broken laws are done to teach children righteousness, not to satisfy themselves by imposing some vengeful penalty. Only a poor or mistaken parent would try to extract a penalty from children when they punish them. However, God the Father is always holy and never punish us for His sake. God's punishments come in the form of wages, something we have earned and which God lets us have to teach us holiness. These punishments are not designed to appease a father, as the pagan gods needed to be appeased, but to help the child.

²⁰⁹ Deut 30:19

A loving human father can simply forgive his errant child without requiring a payment be made for the sins (the breaking of the father's law) of his children if that is the best thing for the child. Yet one of the biggest mysteries of Christianity is that God our Father, who defines Himself as love,²¹⁰ supposedly requires a penalty to be paid every single time His law is violated. According to standard Christian theology, He is not allowed to simply forgive, even if that is the best thing for child. Zeus and Baal may have been those kind of gods, but is YHVH, the creator of all things and our loving Father, really bound by the same rules that mankind bound upon their false gods? And make no mistake that teaching the only way to pay the penalty for my and your sins was with the human sacrifice and death of His only begotten son, Jesus the Christ, is teaching that exact thing. And the Christian teaching that supposedly "the penalty paid by Jesus on the cross" is actually a forgiveness that God could not otherwise grant for breaking His law is equating YHVH to Zeus and Baal. Love, after all, is nothing more than God's spiritual character expressed in a manner that physical human beings can understand.

The Forgiveness of God

What is Forgiveness?

Mise-en-scene is a movie technique that frames a shot of the movie to allow the movie maker to set common ground with and advance the story to his audience before the actors deliver a line. Setting the scene, as *mise-en-scene* is usually translated, is something we need to do before we can delve into how God the Father forgives His children. Paul writes to inform us we may not be able to grasp the entirety of how God operates and may not understand fully what He does, but we can understand His actions as a child would understand his father's actions.²¹¹ If we understand how we imperfectly forgive, we can better understand how our Father perfectly forgives because we are talking about dad, not about how Zeus or Baal.

Which actions of God connote forgiveness and which do not? The world around us has many examples that can help us frame what forgiveness is and is not. One such example can be found

²¹⁰1 Jojm 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love

²¹¹ 1 Cor. 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

by examining the economic downturn affecting the world, including the United States, since 2008. President Obama instituted a mortgage forgiveness program to help home owners who could not pay their mortgages. This program encourages banks to forgive a portion of the mortgage debt of home owners and lower the interest rates the banks charge. This program partially forgives mortgage loans. If we theoretically expand this program, we can help define what forgiveness is and what it is not.

If you bought a home for three hundred thousand dollars and you put twenty percent down, your original mortgage would be 240,000 dollars. After you paid your mortgage for five year, you would owe the bank 220,000 dollars (only a slight exaggeration). If something happened, like you lost your job or got injured and you could not make your mortgage payments, the bank has multiple options on how to handle your situation. You have signed a legal binding contract, also known as a covenant, that gives the bank the right to take ownership of your home if you violate this covenant. You could call the bank and let them know you were really sorry, repentant, for not being able to pay the mortgage, but there is nothing you can do about it. The first option the bank might take is to inform you that you no longer had to pay anything to the bank and they were sending you a copy of the deed free and clear. In this first case, your debt was forgiven by the bank. The terms of your covenant were violated by you and you really didn't deserve to have this debt forgiven, but the bank has shown you mercy because it thought that was the best course of action and you are now debt free. The bank's forfeiture of payments and the retiring of the debt fit the standard and scriptural definitions of forgiveness.

However, a second option the bank could take would be to enforce the covenant. Because you legally owe the bank money for your mortgage and cannot pay, they could require you to pay the debt by foreclosure on your house, which was the agreed payment for violating the terms your mortgage covenant. The law states the bank would be well within its rights and most people would agree that the bank would be exercising its legal rights to foreclose on the property to receive the payment it was owed. Foreclosure is a legally viable option that the bank could exercise, but the actions of foreclosure and eviction are not forgiveness. It would simply be the payment of the debt you owed at the pre-agreed price if you violated the covenant.

A third alternative would be if someone else, like a rich uncle or perhaps loving children, heard about your inability to fulfill your mortgage covenant with the bank and intervened by paying the debt for you. You would no longer owe the money to the bank. In all three of these scenarios, you could not pay the debt you were legally obligated to pay. But in this third scenario of your non-payment of debt, did the bank show mercy and forgive your debt or did they demand and receive payment in full? The answer is obvious that the debt was not forgiven, but was paid for.

In trying to frame what forgiveness is and what it is not, we have listed three scenarios where you did not pay a legally binding debt to someone you had a contract or covenant with, in this case a bank. However, the bank forgave your debt in only one of these three scenarios. When the bank said you did not have to pay the rest of your debt, you were forgiven. However, when the bank followed the law and foreclosed on your house in the second scenario there was obviously no forgiveness of debt. The bank also did not show mercy or forgiveness in the third scenario, when someone else paid off your mortgage debt for you. Some might say that if the bank allowed or even facilitated the paying off of your debt, they showed mercy and arranged for forgiveness of your debt. However, these helpful actions by the bank in the third scenario do not fit the definition of forgiveness of debt because the debt still had to be paid. It was simply not paid by you.

“Forgiveness is typically defined as the process of concluding resentment, indignation or anger as a result of a perceived offense, difference or mistake, and/or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution. The Oxford English Dictionary defines forgiveness as ‘to grant free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt.’”²¹² If the bank simply followed the law by demanding payment and then it received payment from a third party, even if it facilitated that payment, the bank could not and would not legally be able claim it forgave your debt. Most people understand this and would laugh at the idea that the bank forgave your mortgage debt if it got paid in full, even if that payment was not made by you. Yet in the mysterious world of Christian theology, YHVH our Father and creator, supposedly demands payment for our violation of the covenant, is paid in full by someone else, and yet this payment is actually somehow forgiveness.

²¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forgiveness#cite_note-apa-0

The scriptural definitions of forgiveness derived from the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament agree with our practical definition that forgiveness is granted when you legally owe something to some else and that other party forfeits payment without any penalty. The Hebrew word translated forgiveness is *sel-ee-khaw'*, which comes from the Hebrew word *saw-lakh'* (Strong's 5547 and 5545 respectively). Their meaning is to pardon or spare. The Greek word for forgiveness is *aphesis*. It is defined as “-freedom; (figuratively) pardon: - deliverance, forgiveness, liberty, remission.”²¹³ The best scriptural definition of forgiveness, which unsurprisingly matches the common definition of what forgiveness actually is, is forgiving a debt without requiring the payment dictated by law. Yet another of the mysteries that the current Christian church labors under that the early church did not is the mystery of how a supposedly wrathful God demands a payment of your debt, receives a payment for that debt, yet that payment is considered forgiveness. As will be shown, in both the Old and the New Testament, the followers of God knew He was a God of forgiveness, mercy and love and not one of wrath and penalties.

God is a forgiving God

The story of Jonah

“Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”²¹⁴ Nineveh was sinful and wicked and God was going to punish it. We know the story of Jonah trying to unsuccessfully run away. Although he resisted, he was sent to do God's will anyway after spending three days and three nights in the belly of the beast. So what happens?

“So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he proclaimed, and said: 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.’”²¹⁵

²¹³ Strong's 859

²¹⁴ Jon 1:1-2 JPS

²¹⁵ Jon 3:3-4 JPS

Jonah is preaching, telling the people of Nineveh that God is going to punish them for their sins. What is the reaction of Nineveh?

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.”²¹⁶ Nineveh actually repents. The story repeated over and over again by prophets of Israel is God pleading with Israel to repent and change their ways so that God could show mercy and not allow the punishment they have earned to come upon them. Israel rarely heeded these warnings. Yet when a prophet of God goes to a gentile, fish-god worshipping people, they heed God’s message and repent. This repentance has the king of Nineveh asking the question, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”²¹⁷

How does God deal with the repentance of Nineveh? Remember, this was gentile nation, not in covenant with God. According to the book of Jonah there was no animal sacrifice made to satiate God’s wrath. The only sacrifice that Nineveh made was humbling themselves and repenting.²¹⁸ “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”²¹⁹

God forgave Nineveh because they humbled themselves before YHVH, repented and asked for forgiveness. God prevented them from receiving the wages of destruction they were owed because they no longer need to be punished because they had already learned the lesson that punishment would have brought. That is forgiveness according to the scriptures and it matches our general understanding of the English word forgiveness. So what is the moral of the story?

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore

²¹⁶ Jon 3:5

²¹⁷ Jon 3:9

²¹⁸ 2 Chron. 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

²¹⁹ Jon 3:10

I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.²²⁰

Jonah knew if Nineveh repented God would forgive them without requiring a penalty or payment be made. The only sacrifice that God required from Nineveh was repentance and the only sacrifice He has ever required for forgiveness was a broken and contrite heart,²²¹ not an animal sacrifice nor a human sacrifice. Why does YHVH not require a penalty like the imaginary false gods that man has created in his image? Because, as the book of Jonah states, God is kind and merciful.²²² God's actions towards a repentant Nineveh in book of Jonah are juxtaposed in scripture against His actions towards the unrepentant nation of Israel to show His children how He treats us and that what He truly desires is a broken and contrite heart so He can have a personal relationship with us. Scripture shows that YHVH despises any penalties that we believe we have to pay to Him.²²³

What God required and what He saw from Nineveh was true repentance and this led to true forgiveness. A number of Christians, both in writing and in person, have balked at my point that God did not require a blood sacrifice or any other kind of payment or penalty when He forgave Nineveh because of their preconceived ideas about God's character and nature. Some Christians have actually presented the incredulously unscriptural suggestion that God may have forgiven Nineveh's physical sins, but He did not forgive their spiritual or eternal sins (We will deal with the ramifications of these imaginary spiritual sins a little later). This is an especially heinous hypothesis because the book of Jonah never describes the evil that Nineveh had done nor repented of in either physical or spiritual terms. Nineveh's sins were not important to the moral of Jonah. Just like the rest of scripture, what mattered in Jonah was Nineveh's repentance.

²²⁰ Jon 4:1-2

²²¹ Ps. 34:18 The LORD [is] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
Ps. 51:17 The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

²²² Jonah 4:2

²²³ Ps. 51:17 The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
Amos 5:21-2 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept [them]: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

The introduction of the idea of physical being as separate and inferior to the spiritual, especially when it comes to the idea of creating an unscriptural categorization of sins, reeks of the gnostic idea that physical is bad and spiritual is good. Gnostic teaching presents the idea that some false god messed up when he created mankind as physical beings and that the serpent was sent to the garden by the true supreme god to teach these lowly physical beings about spirit. This is the Gnosticism that was seeping into the church as early as the end of the apostle John's life. He fought it vociferously for the last few years of his life, but many of its mysteries entered the church in the third century A.D. and obviously still cause damage to this day by distorting not just who God is, but who man is. The theory that God forgave Nineveh's physical sins, but not its spiritual sins takes the obvious spiritual lesson of the book of Jonah, that if you repent God will forgive you, and attempts to make it into a mystery with some kind of undefined spiritual sin that is different from physical sin. It then requires God to forgive one kind of sin but not another when His children really repent. This is the kind of mysterious, wrathful God that many Christians envision, but it is not YHVH, the creator God of scripture. And it is not the kind of God the apostolic church envisioned. The envisioned a spiritual creator who created mankind as physical children and said it was good. It was just the way God wanted it.²²⁴

Another argument raised against God granting forgiveness to Nineveh is that the book of Jonah never explicitly states that God forgave them, which is true. However, this theory requires us to believe that when God's children, and we are all His children, created in His image, truly repent we may avoid punishment, but we are not really forgiven. Is this truly how Christians see a loving Father? Unfortunately far too many of them do and never call on or talk to him like dad. The idea God will not punish us if we repent, but He still cannot forgive us until a penalty has been paid, which is how some Christians have explained God's reaction to Nineveh's repentance, makes a mockery of Jonah 3:10. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did [it] not."²²⁵ This hypothesis requires us to believe that God extending His mercy when Nineveh repented and rescinding His punishment is not forgiveness. This is truly unscriptural,

²²⁴ Gen 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good.

²²⁵ Jonah 3:10

not just because it requires changing the scriptural meaning of the word forgiveness, but it also does not match God's process of forgiveness as defined in scripture, as the verses below show.

“The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”²²⁶

“For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to pardon, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.”²²⁷

A third argument has been advanced by those who simply cannot accept the scriptural implications that God forgave Nineveh when they repented without requiring the payment of a penalty. These Christians argue Nineveh's repentance simply delayed God's punishment, thus there was no real forgiveness. The supposed justification for this hypothesis is derived from the story of Manasseh and Josiah in the twenty third chapter of second Kings. Manasseh was one of the most evil kings in the history of Israel and he reigned for 55 years. Yet his son Josiah is listed as one of the few righteous kings in the history of Israel. Josiah's story has a footnote about his father's lawlessness. “And like unto him (*Josiah*) was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations wherewith Manasseh had provoked Him.”²²⁸ Christians who cannot stand the thought that God could forgive Nineveh without require the payment of a penalty suggest God delayed His punishment of Nineveh just as he supposedly delayed his punishment of Judah at the time of Josiah. They suggest that punishment came later for both because God never truly forgave either because neither paid a penalty. This line of reasoning suggests that God delays his punishment if a nation repents, but He does not have to forgive them. Thus repentance only delays punishment because God supposedly has to punish those who break His law unless a penalty is paid.

²²⁶ Num. 14:18-9

²²⁷ Ps. 86:5 JPS

²²⁸ 2 Kings 23:25-6

However, attempting to use the story of Manasseh and Josiah in second Kings to show that God supposedly did not forgive Nineveh, even when they truly repented, is fallacious. It makes a mockery of the scriptural lesson of Jonah and Nineveh. It creates a God who demands a penalty be paid to satiate His wrath rather than a father who uses punishments to guide his children to righteousness and holiness. Unfortunately this wild, unfounded speculation also shows a willingness of Christians to advance an erroneous understanding of what the writer of second Kings presented about God's punishment of Judah because they would rather accept the mystery of a wrathful God who can only be appeased with a priceless gift rather to accept the scriptural fact that YHVH is the loving father of all mankind who can simply forgive Nineveh.

Acceptance of the straightforward meaning of God's forgiveness of Nineveh in the book of Jonah would necessitate Christians changing their view of God from a mysterious, wrathful punisher, which is how most Christians envision the Father to a loving, merciful Father who only wants the best for the children He loves. The Father is supposedly the mean God of the Old Testament, yet Jesus is the loving God of the New Testament who died to show us how much he, but not the Father, loves us, yet these two are somehow the same God. I personally have not been able to fathom how Christians in general can have such a muddled view of the Father when the entirety of scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, is designed to show YHVH as a loving father. However, throughout its history mankind has rejected this view of their creator in favor of a mysterious and wrathful god who could only be appeased by paying a penalty. It appears that the early church rejected this view and embraced the truth of John 3:16, a truth the modern Christian church has by and large rejected by making God a mystery and by redefining how forgiveness and grace work.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown help expound the meaning of verses 5 and 6 of the 23rd chapter of 2nd Kings. "The national reformation which Josiah carried on was acquiesced in by the people from submission to the royal will; but they entertained a secret and strong hankering after the suppressed idolatries. Though outwardly purified, their hearts were not right towards God, as appears from many passages of the prophetic writings; their thorough reform was hopeless; and

God, who saw no sign of genuine repentance, allowed His decree (2Ki 21:12-15) for the subversion of the kingdom to take fatal effect.”²²⁹

Keil and Delitzsch agree. “Nevertheless the Lord turned not from the great fierceness of His wrath, wherewith He had burned against Judah on account of all the provocations ‘with which Manasseh had provoked Him.’ With this sentence, in which אָלֹהִים לֹא שָׁב forms an unmistakeable word-play upon אֱלֹהִים שָׁבָה אֵלָיו, the historian introduces the account not merely of the end of Josiah's reign, but also of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah. Manasseh is mentioned here and at 2Ki_24:3 and Jer_15:4 as the person who, by his idolatry and his unrighteousness, with which he provoked God to anger, had brought upon Judah and Jerusalem the unavoidable judgment of rejection. It is true that Josiah had exterminated outward and gross idolatry throughout the land by his sincere conversion to the Lord, and by his zeal for the restoration of the lawful worship of Jehovah, and had persuaded the people to enter into covenant with its God once more; but a thorough conversion of the people to the Lord he had not been able to effect. For, as Clericus has correctly observed, ‘although the king was most religious, and the people obeyed him through fear, yet for all that the mind of the people was not changed, as is evident enough from the reproaches of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and other prophets, who prophesied about that time and a little after.’ With regard to this point compare especially the first ten chapters of Jeremiah, which contain a *resumé* of his labours in the reign of Josiah, and bear witness to the deep inward apostasy of the people from the Lord, not only before and during Josiah's reform of worship, but also afterwards. As the Holy One of Israel, therefore, God could not forgive any more, but was obliged to bring upon the people and kingdom, after the death of Josiah, the judgment already foretold to Manasseh himself (2Ki 21:12.)”²³⁰

God did not wait to punish Judah for the sins they committed under Manasseh until the reign of Josiah ended. God punished them for the sins they committed during and after the reign of Josiah, but these sins were standardized and inculcated into Judah during the reign of Manasseh and the Israelites never repented of these sins the way Nineveh repented of its sins. The lesson of

²²⁹ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary on the Old Testament, from E-sword commentaries on 2 Kings 23:26

²³⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, From e-sword, commentary on 2 Kings 23:26

scripture, amplified in the book of Jonah and the sermon on the mount, is if a person or a people genuinely repent, whether they are Israelites or gentiles, God will show mercy and forgive them. God said, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”²³¹ However, the Israelites never repented under Josiah. The book of Jeremiah clearly depicts Judah putting on an outward show of following God’s ways under king Josiah because of the fear of being punished by zealous king Josiah, but their hearts never left the way of Manasseh.

Judah at the time of Josiah was like the men of Afghanistan who gave up having 10 year old boys serve as sex slaves during the reign of the Taliban because they were afraid of the punishment such acts would bring. However, within months of the American invasion, the 10 year sex slaves being led on leashes re-appeared in the streets of Kabul. Even though the men of Kabul did not use 10 year old boys during the reign of the Taliban, they never repented of that sin either, just as Israel never repented of the sins of Manasseh. In modern Christian circles these facades are often referred to a churchianity or playing church. Thus God was forced to punish Judah for their current sins when Josiah died, not some past sins that were supposedly mystically carried down from the time of Manasseh through the time of righteous king Josiah and then mysteriously transferred onto Judah during the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and finally Zedekiah.

The idea that God did not forgive the city of Nineveh when it truly repented does such great damage to the integrity of scripture because the whole concept that God is relating to His people in Jonah is that He is a God of mercy and love and forgiveness. This is apparently something most Christians don’t want to believe. God operates with us in ways that we understand and does not require some kind of mysterious penalty be paid to satiate His wrath. He punishes His children, which includes all of mankind, only if they refuse to repent and change their ways and that punishment is the best thing for them. This punishment is no more a penalty than when I punish my boys for misbehaving. This punishment is to teach the offender, not to satisfy some need in the offended. Far too often mankind prefers a God that can be paid off with a penalty,

²³¹ 1Chron. 7:14

like Zeus or Hera. Why? I believe it is because it is easier to pay a penalty to a wrathful god than deal with a loving father who requires a personal relationship with true repentance and true forgiveness. Jonah knew that was the kind of God YHVH was and is. Are we willing to believe scripture? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”²³² The sacrifice of Jesus was done to show us how much our Father loves us, something mankind has trouble believing this. The sacrifice of Jesus was not to show us that God supposedly loves us just a little more than He hates us because we have incensed His almost insatiable wrath by being human.

The Christian view of Forgiveness

Some may say I have exaggerated the Christian mystery of how God can demand a priceless payment be made to satisfy a penalty that He has imposed, yet at the same time call this penalty forgiveness. However, C.S. Lewis explanation of how Christianity generally views the forgiveness of God agrees with my assessment.

The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. A good many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that it does work. I will tell you what I think it is like.... A man can eat his dinner without understanding exactly how food nourishes him. A man can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works: indeed, he certainly would not know how it works until he has accepted it.

We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed. Any theories we build up as to how Christ's death did all this are, in my view, quite secondary: mere plans or diagrams to be left alone if they do not help us, and, even if they do help us, not to be confused with the thing itself. All the same, some of these theories are worth looking at.”²³³

Again, the idea of how paying a penalty is actually forgiveness is just one of the mysteries surround the modern Christian faith. Lewis writes Christians don't have to know why God required a human sacrifice, well a 100% human and 100% god sacrifice, but Lewis writes we know He did because that was the only way God could forgive us. And not only don't we know

²³² John 3:16

²³³ Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*, 1952; Harper Collins: 2001 pp. 54-56)

why, but even asking the question why is often just a waste of time because the answer does not really matter as long as we accept this mystery as fact. It appears the early church did not fall into the trap of having their religion and their theology and their God be a mystery that they could not explain because they changed the world by being able to answer the question of what does God require of us. The answer was simple. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what [is] good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”²³⁴ The nation of Israel was told this answer when they signed their suzerain treaty that is the book of Deuteronomy. In what many modern translation footnote as the essence of the law, as does the New King James below, we are shown what God requires of His called out people.

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,¹³ *and* to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good? ¹⁴ Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it. ¹⁵ The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. ¹⁶ Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. ¹⁸ He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²⁰ You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.²³⁵

The clear message of the gospel is the same. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment. And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love [his]

²³⁴ Mal. 6:8

²³⁵ Deut. 10:12-20

neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.²³⁶

God did not and does not want a penalty to be paid to Him. What He demands is that we continue to grow up to be like Him.

The Only Example of God ordering a Human Sacrifice

Hopefully the reader is familiar with God ordering Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abram had covenanted with God for most of his life. He had made mistakes, but he is the father of the faithful because he stayed true to that covenant. That faith was so great that God chose Abraham's lineage to bring forth the messiah promised to Adam and Eve.

The birth of Isaac was miraculous. Not only was Abraham almost one hundred years old when he was conceived, but his wife, who could not conceive in her youth, had already gone through menopause before Isaac was conceived, thus it should have been impossible for Sarah to conceive. Just as it should have been impossible for a virgin to conceive. Yet God does things in His own time and in His own way. And in His time God brought forth the only begotten son of Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham would have been a very old man by the time he was ordered to sacrifice Isaac. Given that Abram had asked for assurances and clarification to God's promises in Genesis 15 and elsewhere, it seems plausible that Abraham must have asked God to clarify a request to sacrifice this son of promise. As a father of three not-so-miraculously born boys, I can only imagine the grief the Abraham must have felt by this command for a human sacrifice from YHVH. We know that even the messiah asked for this kind of clarification from his Father about his sacrifice.²³⁷

Why did God order Abraham to sacrifice the son of promise, the only begotten son between him and Sarah? God was testing Abraham according to scripture.²³⁸ Isaac was likely a teenager as he

²³⁶ Mark 12:28-34

²³⁷ Matt. 26:39 O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

²³⁸ Gen 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham,

took this three day trek with his father. Isaac asked his dad, “My father.’ And he said: ‘Here am I, my son.’ And he said: ‘Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?’ And Abraham said: ‘God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.’ So they went both of them together.”²³⁹ Abraham prophesies that God himself will provide the lamb to accomplish His goals, which God did then and 1,500 years later.

Again, why did God ask Abraham to perform this human sacrifice? Does it have anything to do with propitiation? Does it have anything to do with sin? Is it YHVH demanding a penalty be paid by Abraham for the blessings he was given by God as Baal and Dagon and Zeus would have supposedly demanded? Does it have anything to do with forgiveness? Scripture clearly states the sacrifice of Isaac was not about any of these things. God told Abraham, “Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.”

God ordered Abraham to make a human sacrifice of his beloved son Isaac to test his faithfulness towards God. That faithfulness showed that Abraham loved God more than he loved his own son, Isaac. And what did the other human sacrifice ordered by God, the sacrifice of His only begotten son, Jesus the Christ, demonstrate? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”²⁴⁰ God sacrifice of Jesus was done to show us that He loves us even more than He loves Jesus. And Christianity has taken God’s actions, the sacrifice of Jesus, which was designed and intended to show just how much God loves His children, just as Abraham showed how much he loved God, and turned it on its head by stating the crucifixion was to satiate God’s wrath towards us.

The crucifixion was intended to show us how much God loves us, something that mankind has been loath to believe since the garden of Eden and Christianity now teaches the crucifixion was required because God is so angry and disgusted with us. And, oh, by the way, states Christian theology, He loves you a little more than He hates you, which is why He supplied the sacrifice to satiate Himself. Would a human child know their Father truly loved them and wanted a personal

²³⁹ Gen. 22:7-8

²⁴⁰ John 3:16

relationship with them if they understood their father felt this way about them? Could a child understand that their father loved them if they were told over and over again that the father had sacrificed their older brother because that was the only way the father could satiate his wrath against that child? Highly doubtful. Yet the mystery of how God could be so furious at what we have done and what we are, the less than perfect human beings that He created us as, that no forgiveness could be extended unless His wrath was satiated by the payment of a stupendously expensive penalty remains one of the main tenants of the Christian faith. And the payment of this penalty to Himself is supposed to show us how much God loves us.

Insights into Forgiveness

Sometimes there is no Forgiveness

Suppose someone commits a crime and is caught. They are judged, sentenced to jail, serve their time and are released. They have paid for their crime. Forgiveness could have been offered and mercy shown if the criminal had been pardoned or given clemency, thus not having to serve some of or their entire sentence. However, since no mercy was shown to this criminal because they served their entire jail term, no forgiveness was given and we generally say they paid for their crimes. If you violate a law and are they sentenced to pay a penalty for that violation and subsequently pay that penalty, you have not been forgiven.

Dealing with Children

God states over and over again that we are His children, created in His image. I have three boys and I am proud of them, but sometimes they break my laws. Sometimes it is out of ignorance. Sometimes they are just pushing the limits. Sometimes they are just being boys and feel the need to wrestle in the house, no matter how many times they have been told not to, especially when they have been sick and are just recovering. Sometimes this disobedience is willful. I have to figure out why they broke my law so I know how to guide them so they will mature and not just stop doing wrong things, but also do the right things. Sometimes I punish them. Sometimes they are totally forgiven without any punishment being administered for what they have done because I believe they have learned their lesson and need mercy. Sometimes they are shown mercy and forgiveness, but they are still punished, just not given the penalties prescribed for their crime, but

something less. My job as their father is to choose the option that will teach them and be best for them. Punishment, mercy and forgiveness all work together in love to help me forge each of my boys into young men. And each of them must be treated differently, even if they have done the same thing, because each of them reacts differently, learns differently and needs different things as they walk their path of life. As a father, it is my job to figure out the right thing to do. But under current Christian theology, which I don't believe the apostolic church followed, YHVH, our Father whose love surpasses imagination, can only punish by supposedly applying the penalty of Jesus' blood for each and every infraction of His law. I began this study to try to find out how God could have fewer tools in His arsenal of love than I have. I started wondering how a being who exemplifies love could not forgive and show mercy in the same way I can. And it became obvious that He has far more tools and far more love than I have. This information was simply lost to Christians as God became a mystery rather than a Father during the second and third centuries and the overriding concept of YHVH as Father was cast aside at the council of Nicaea.

“Spare the rod and spoil the child.”²⁴¹ I have seen enough self-centered brats to know that is true. But I also know if you do not spare the rod some of the time, you also spoil the child by breaking them. Far too many children brought up in legalistic churches, like the churches of God, Seventh Day Adventist and Jehovah's Witnesses were required to pay a penalty for violating the law almost every time they did it (well, at least almost every time they were caught) from what I have seen. I have seen fathers beat, really beat, their children with a belt. I have seen fathers slap and even punch their children. And this was when they pulled them out into the hall at church services. I do not image what they did in private, but I have seen the results when children believe that is how fathers react. These children were not shown mercy or forgiveness and were told paying the penalty was actually showing love. And a lot of them are now broken because their parents only knew and were only seeking righteousness and not holiness, which is supposed to include mercy and grace.

It should be obvious that parents must show love and judgment and mercy and grace to their children by forgiving them and not requiring a payment for every violation of the law depending

²⁴¹ Prov. 13:24

on what the best thing for their children. GOD THE LAWGIVER supposedly can't exercise this same kind of love? I, as human being with more shortcomings than I like to think about, am more merciful and forgiving and loving than our merciful and loving Father? That appears to be the case because current Christianity theology uses an eisegesis Romans 6:23 to teach that there can be no forgiveness of sin because each and every sin requires that God kill you.²⁴² And the only way you deserve not to be killed eternally is if God gives you a gift, but that gift is actually inflicting the death penalty on your older brother to pay your penalty because you are supposedly so vile in your supposedly fallen state. And paying that penalty is actually Christian forgiveness. And this idea that the payment of a penalty is actually forgiveness is more than a theological mystery like the trinity. Most Christians don't understand nor do they care to understand the trinity, but ask most any Christian and they will tell you God can only forgive their sins because of the human sacrifice of Jesus the Christ. God's son supposedly continues to pay the price for our ongoing sins with his crucifixion. That is supposedly part of what the core of Christianity is all about.

So there really isn't forgiveness from the Father because our sins are actually paid for by the death of His only begotten son. Remember, if the bank required payment, even if someone else paid it, then there was no forgiveness. It was simply transference of the debt. So if God requires payment, even if it is from someone else, no matter whether He facilitated it or not, then payment was made and forgiveness was not required or given. Is that really how the God of the Bible deals with His children? Judaism and Islam, two monotheistic religions, teach that God (Allah in Islam) can simply forgive sin without requiring the payment of a penalty for transgression of the law if that is what is best for the sinner. It is highly likely that the early church transformed the world with that same teaching. How beautiful to know that God your Father has so much love for you that He can and will forgive you, show you mercy, just because He knows that is the best thing for you. This view of God and how He deals with us is very different from the view that man is fallen and vile and that the only way God can forgive you is to kill your older brother in your stead and the only way He can stand to be in your presence is if He envisions you as your

²⁴² Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin are death...

older brother. I personally have no doubt this view of our Father effects our walk with God and our holiness.

However, Christian theologians, only a few of which have been previously quoted in the paper, have written and preached for millennia that in some mysterious, mystical and magical way God can be paid for the violation of His law by the sacrifice of His only begotten son, yet this payment of a penalty is still somehow forgiveness. They state God is the one who supplied method of forgiveness when He gave His only begotten son to pay the penalty for us, so He forgives us as He sees fit. They write things like, “The necessity of appeasing God is something many religions have in common. In ancient pagan religions, as well as in many religions today, the idea is taught that man appeases God by offering various gifts or sacrifices. However, the Bible teaches that God Himself has provided the only means through which His wrath can be appeased and sinful man can be reconciled to Him. In the New Testament, the act of propitiation always refers to the work of God and not the sacrifices or gifts offered by man. The reason for this is that man is totally incapable of satisfying God’s justice except by spending eternity in hell. There is no service, sacrifice or gift that man can offer that will appease the holy wrath of God or satisfy His perfect justice. The only satisfaction, or propitiation, that could be acceptable to God and that could reconcile man to Him, had to be made by God.”²⁴³

Eminent theologian Charles Ryrie agrees that God’s wrath towards His children supposedly needs to be quenched by a sacrifice. He writes, “Propitiation means the turning away of wrath by an offering. In relation to soteriology, propitiation means placating or satisfying the wrath of God by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.”²⁴⁴ David Stewart writes, “The word ‘propitiation’ means ‘to appease one’s wrath.’ ‘Appeased’ means ‘to make peace with.’ Humanity had sinned. God was angered. God’s holiness demanded justice. Humanity could not redeem himself and was at enmity (hostility) with God. Humanity had become the enemy of God because of sin... Nevertheless, God expressed His love for humanity by coming down to the earth in the form of a man and laying down His own human life in sacrifice to pay for the sins of humanity. Jesus died,

²⁴³ <http://www.gotquestions.org/propitiation.html>

²⁴⁴ Ryrie, Charles C. (1999-01-11). *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Kindle Locations 5503-5504). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

was buried and rose again. Christ's blood was applied in Heaven. The father's anger was APPEASED by the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God's demand for justice had been completely satisfied by the redeeming work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus had made peace with God the Father possible again for mankind... Propitiation is Jesus meeting the demands of the Father, to appease His wrath, so that humanity could be redeemed to God. Thankfully, Jesus paid the price for our sins."²⁴⁵

Jason Jackson writes about propitiation, which is translated from the Greek word (*hilasterion*). "The background of the related Greek terms is interesting. These words were used of a sacrifice one brought in order to appease the anger of the gods. The individual chanced that the attitude of the god or gods might be altered, hoping that the gods would be disposed to look upon the person with favor, from which further blessings might follow. Although certain characteristics of the word remain, others do not. While Greek pagan gods were believed to despise humans, the true God loves sinful man, and that without prejudice."²⁴⁶ So gods who required propitiation, which is the payment of a penalty to appease the wrath of that god, usually despised humans according to Mr. Jackson of the Christian Courier.

YHVH supposedly requires the same propitiation, the same payment of a penalty, to appease His wrath that the pagan gods required because they despised humans. However Christian theologians write over and over again that YHVH requires this payment of a penalty because He supposedly loves mankind. Through a mysterious process that required the human sacrifice of His only begotten son YHVH's love supposedly overcame His wrath. The mystery of how wrath+penalty=love+mercy+forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian mysteries.

Although the idea that God requires a propitiation to supposedly appease His wrath is almost universally accepted, there are some Christians who disagree. "Theologians stress the idea of propitiation because it specifically addresses the aspect of the Atonement dealing with God's wrath. Critics of penal substitutionary atonement state that seeing the Atonement as appeasing

²⁴⁵ http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/salvation_webpages/14-jesus_our_propitiation.htm

²⁴⁶ Jackson, Jason, *What is Propitiation?* <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1248-what-is-propitiation>

God is a pagan idea that makes God seem tyrannical.”²⁴⁷ To help explain why penal substitutionary atonement is unscriptural, we can use some of the points brought up by those who support it. As Jason Jackson points out, *hilasterion*, the Greek word usually translated as propitiation, is the word used for the mercy seat in the LXX, the Greek version of the Tanak, the Old Testament. “The Latin form *propitiatorium* was employed to translate the Greek word, *hilasterion*, which is found 22 times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Interestingly, *hilasterion* was used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew term “covering” or “mercy seat,” which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant where the sacrificial blood was placed for the atonement of the sins of the people.”²⁴⁸

We know from Hebrews 10:4 that the blood of bulls and goats never forgave sins.²⁴⁹ This is not some astounding new truth Paul is sharing with Hebrew Christians. The entire nation of Israel knew their sins were forgiven after the atonement sacrifice was performed on the tenth day of Tishri every year. Scripture states, “For on that day shall *the priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that* ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.”²⁵⁰ But the nation of Israel was well it was God who forgave their sins on the tenth day of Tishri and the blood of the sacrifice on that day was nothing more than a powerful physical reminder of this fact. Paul writes in the seventh through tenth chapter of Hebrews that Jesus fulfills the role of the atonement sacrifice, whose function was not to forgive sins.

Paul couldn’t be clearer that no blood sacrifice ever forgave sins. The atonement sacrifice, and by extension the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah, was to communicate to God’s people that a spiritual Father would forgive the sins of His physical children who were in covenant with Him. The atonement sacrifice was a once a year reminder of how loving and merciful God was and the crucifixion of Jesus was supposed to bring that to remembrance every day for Christians.

For millennia Christian theologians have written that YHVH is just like all the pagan gods because He demands to be paid off by His worshippers, but in some mysterious way only He can

²⁴⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propitiation>

²⁴⁸ Jackson, Jason, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1248-what-is-propitiation>

²⁴⁹ Heb. 10:4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

²⁵⁰ Lev. 16:30

pay Himself off. And this is one of the very cornerstones of the theology of Christianity. So let me ask you a question, dear reader. You owe someone \$10,000 dollars and you can't pay. So the person says, okay, I will arrange to have the payment done another way. You can work in my shop at 10 dollars an hour until it is paid for. Or you go to your relatives and the relatives pay off the debt. Or, the person says, your older brother has done very well and is rich. He can pay off your debt. Does your debt have to be paid in these situations? Of course it does. Now let's imagine the person you owe the debt to is your father and he is telling you he will put you in jail if you do not pay him back. Even if your older brother, who is so rich that he will not even miss the 10,000 dollars, pays your father for you, your debt was not forgiven. You did not go to jail and you are thankful to your brother, but how would you feel about your father if he refused to give you mercy when you really needed it and instead demanded and received payment from your older brother? Is it any wonder Christianity usually loves and admires Jesus, but holds God the Father at arm's length as the mean God of that Old Testament?

It should be obvious that a major hypothesis of this paper is that God does not have to be paid a penalty for every sin every committed. If all sins are paid for by the shed blood of Jesus, then they were not really forgiven. Those sins were paid for. GOD THE FIERCE LAWGIVER of Christianity since at least the time of the Nicene council supposedly requires the payment of this penalty. But does God our Father? Our Father had the bible written for us so we would know how to prosper both physically and spiritually even before we forged a covenant relationship with Him. Our Father, YHVH, the God of creation, made a priceless sacrifice because that was the best way to show us how much He loved us after we had rejected Him and the personally relationship He wanted to have with us. This does not sound like Zeus or Baal or Dagon. It sounds like the god of the two monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism and Islam, who believe and teach their god can simply forgive sins. Christianity also used to be a monotheistic religion, but that officially ended with the council of Nicaea. And not unsurprisingly, the impact of the holy church of God on the rest of world dramatically decreased.

Remember, repentance is not the payment of a penalty because repentance is learning you have been doing something wrong and then changing what you do. A holy people would know that repentance was a perfectly acceptable, and evened welcome part, of a non-perfect, but holy

lifestyle. Repentance is not offering payment for past actions. Repentance is actually feeling sorry for doing past mistakes, which the bible often refers to as having a broken and contrite heart, learning from those mistakes, asking for forgiveness and mercy, and striving to do better in the future. No payment is required in that process. Repentance is just part of a personal relationship where you actually apologize for doing wrong and change because you are truly sorry to the core of your being for letting the other person down by doing the wrong. God our Father wants us to be holy as He is holy and like any good father uses any number of ways to help His children grow into the fullness of His stature.

The Role of Sacrifices

The early church was well aware of the Levitical sacrificial system and the part it played in God's religious system. This sacrificial system was a requirement of God for the nation of Israel, but even when it was given it was not integral like the 10 commandments or worshipping God in spirit and in truth. The prophet Jeremiah clarified that although the sacrificial system was a part of the Sinai covenant, they were not an integral part. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."²⁵¹ The physical sacrifices were given to a physical people as a reminder to obey a spiritual God and walk a holy walk with Him.

The book of Leviticus details the part played by sacrifices. If you read the entire book of Leviticus, it makes it clear that the purpose of the sacrifices was not to pay a penalty to God, but to help the people know they could actually facilitate reconciliation with God. Israel was supposed to understand that God did not desire sacrifices. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required."²⁵² However the prophets paint a clear picture of Israel believing they could pay a physical penalty

²⁵¹ Jer. 7:21-3

²⁵² Ps. 40:6

to God to force Him to forgive them. They were wrong. Just as those who believe the only way for God to forgive them today is to pay a penalty, or have someone else pay it for them, are also wrong.

King David was also painfully aware of the kind of sacrifices God wanted. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”²⁵³ God told Israel what He desired from them, which is the same thing He wants for all His Children. “And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.” (Lev. 20:26) God always wanted the same thing from His people. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”²⁵⁴ God demanded a personal relationship with His people and the sacrifices were simply a physical instrument used to help His people understand what relationship entailed.

But the nations of Israel and Judah paid no heed to what God wanted and instead wound up treating Him like the gentiles treated their gods. The gentiles bribed and cajoled their gods with sacrifices that supposedly paid the penalties their gods demanded. These sacrifices supposedly forced their gods to bless them. The history of Israel recorded in scripture shows that is how usually treated YHVH. The verses below paint a clear picture of God rejecting the sacrifices of a non-repentant Israel.

To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge

²⁵³ Ps 51:17

²⁵⁴ Isa 57:15

the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.²⁵⁵

Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together.²⁵⁶

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.²⁵⁷

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.²⁵⁸

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Is. 1:11-18

²⁵⁶ Is. 43:23-6

²⁵⁷ Jer. 6:19-20

²⁵⁸ Jer. 7:21-6

²⁵⁹ Mic. 6:6-8

The history of Israel has them holding God at arm's length and believing if they paid Him a large enough penalty, He would have to forgive them and bless them. They were wrong. Christianity today holds God at arm's length and believes He has been paid a priceless penalty that forces Him to forgive them and bless them.

How much clearer does God our Father have to be? "I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together."²⁶⁰ The prophets carry the message that the creator God of this world is not to be treated like Zeus or Baal or Vishnu of the other false gods over and over again. God did not want animal sacrifices, with the shedding of their blood, to take the place of following Him. Not only did He not have to be bought off to give His blessings, as the false gods supposedly did, He did not even wanted the transgressor of His law to "make payment" for the sins they committed. Payment was only required to force the person to learn the same lesson that repentance brought. As Isaiah 1:18 states, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."²⁶¹

As a modern day example of how Israel dealt with God and the sacrificial system He put in place imagine you have a 17 year old son who has worked hard and actually bought his own car. He has put a lot of work into it and you are proud of him. He is generally a good son and he listens to you and there is mutual love and respect. You have boundaries and rules and your son generally follows them.

One day your son comes to you and says, "Dad, I am headed out with my friends tonight. We are going to be drag racing our cars. We won't smoke any dope or drink anything until we get done racing. But after the racing we are going to indulge and my friends even tell me there are going to be women there to party with. It sounds like a great time and I won't be back until tomorrow morning."

²⁶⁰ Is. 43:25

²⁶¹ Is. 1:18

A shocked father should respond to his son, “Son, you know the rules. I don’t approve of that kind of thing. There will almost certainly be serious consequences for those sorts of actions. I want you to be safe and not do this.”

The son replies, “I know dad. I counted up the possible violations of “dad’s law” and here is three hundred dollars I’ve saved. I am leaving it here on the table, which should cover any of the violations. I wanted to make sure that we still have a good relationship after tonight, so I wanted to make sure I could pay penalty you instituted beforehand. Bye Dad, see you tomorrow morning.”

This is actually the way Israel treated God, except their relationship with their Father was not as good. Israel metaphorically kept putting the money on the table to pay for doing what their father told them not to do and believed that is all the relationship required. They treated YHVH like the gentiles around them treated their false gods. The gentile nations around Israel believed if you paid your god enough, especially a priceless payment, like sacrificing your children in the fire, then your god would have to forgive and bless you. Israel followed this detestable practice and YHVH hated it.²⁶² And at the center of modern Christianity is a Father sacrificing His son so that forgiveness and blessing can come upon the people who follow him. This view of Jesus’ sacrifice has always reminded me of Bonhoeffer’s cheap grace by portraying the crucifixion of the Messiah as being the equivalent of a black box where sin is mystically absorbed and abolishes those sins without Christians having to work on their relationship with either God or man.

Returning to the son who thought that paying penalty for violating his father’s law was about the father and not about the son. Would any father in his right mind give his son the impression if he paid for his bad deeds, either in advance or afterward, by paying a certain price, the those deeds

²⁶² 2 Kings 16:3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

2 Kings 17:31 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

Ezek. 16:20-21 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter, That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them?

were “covered?” Isn’t the purpose of parents listing punishment to deter bad actions and promote good ones rather than to demand restitution? Of course it is.

Wouldn’t any real father say to a son who wanted to do bad things and pay the penalty for it, “Son, I don’t want payment for bad deeds. I instituted these payments to encourage you to follow the right way and not get hurt doing the wrong things. I want you change your plans because that is what is best for you. You don’t even know all the bad things that could happen to you if you go out with your friends as you have planned tonight. You might do something that you would have to pay for the rest of your life. You could hurt yourself or someone else with your car. You might get a girl pregnant. I instituted my rules with their required payments so you wouldn’t have to pay the price of doing self-destructive things. I love you too much to let you make those kinds of mistakes.”

Any good father would desire his son to simply forego the actions that could and probably will hurt him. If you build the right relationship between father and son you can have that kind of conversation. But even then, boys will be boys. If a son messes up by pushing the boundaries, a loving father may still have to punish his son so a lesson is taught. A payment might have to be paid for these action, like a speeding ticket or a life in a wheel chair after wrecking a car or a life in jail if his son kills someone while drag racing. These payments are consequences for breaking the law. Although society may demand restitution by having the offender pay a penalty for violating the law, no loving father is going to demand such a penalty be paid as restitution to satiate his wrath for the violation of the law.

Even if a father learns after the fact that his son has made bad choices, it is possible he may demand the son make the payment for violating the law, but this payment will be demanded so the son can learn a lesson. But it is far more likely a father will show mercy and forgiveness if his son has learned his lesson and repented from his wrong and “evil” deeds. This is the kind of relationship God demands with His children and when the nation of Israel rejected God’s desires for them, He was upset, as any good father would be.

Blood and Sin under the Old Covenant

The book of Leviticus has the most detailed picture of the sacrificial system instituted by God. We have already established that God did not need nor want this system, so He must have instituted it for Israel rather than for Himself. The seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, which follows a detailed description of the atonement sacrifice in Leviticus 16, explains why this system was set up.

Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This *is* the thing which the LORD hath commanded, saying, What man soever *there be* of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth *it* out of the camp, And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people: To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them *for* peace offerings unto the LORD. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the LORD. And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations. And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul.²⁶³

God taught that all sacrifices had to be done at the tabernacle and then the temple so His people would not sacrifice to false gods. The sacrifices were instituted to draw the nation of Israel to YHVH. He said if anyone performed a sacrifice outside of the temple, with or without blood being shed, then they were to be cut off from covenanting with God. God states that life is in the blood, which we know is scientifically true. Verse 11 states it is the blood of the sacrifice that makes atonement for the soul.

²⁶³ Lev. 17:2-11

Most scholars agree that Paul is referencing the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus in Hebrews 9:22 when he writes, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”²⁶⁴ Is God teaching Israel that the blood of the sacrifice was actually making the atonement or giving forgiveness for sin in Lev. 17:11 or Heb. 9:22? We just read how God detested sacrifices if they were not done with true repentance. Therefore God must be teaching Israel that their sins are atoned for, forgiven, if they follow His ways, which including sacrificing at the temple in accordance with the law of Lev. 17. We have established that Paul writes in the beginning of Hebrews 10 that the blood of bulls and goats does not take away sin.²⁶⁵ Even though many modern Christians believe Paul was giving his fellow Hebrews new insight into the purpose of the Levitical sacrificial system, Paul’s writings were nothing new or dramatic. They were simply a reminder of the function of the sacrifices under the Levitical priesthood, just as Paul’s outline of the atonement sacrifice in Hebrews 7 through 9 was nothing more than a review. The nation of Israel was supposed to know, just as Jonah knew, it was God who forgave sins and the sacrifices were just an outward sign of repentance made by physical human beings towards their spiritual Father. Lev. 17:11 and Heb. 9:22 reveal that the blood of the sacrifice, when sprinkled on the altar in the manner proscribed by God, is what allowed reconciliation of the person to God. This reconciliation does not mystically come about because of this single act of contrition. But the act of performing the sacrifice in the right manner as God required indicated that the person making the sacrifice was living a holy lifestyle and was in a covenant relationship and that relationship is what leads to forgiveness.

It was not the sacrifice itself or the sheading of the blood, but the recognition that YHVH was their father and they were doing their best to follow Him that led to forgiveness being granted by the creator of the universe. The sacrifice was supposed to show they had followed God’s commands and done so with their whole heart. The next step in this process is God forgiving sins and God states if you defy Him and do not shed the blood of the sacrifice at the altar, or even if you shed the blood of the sacrifice at the altar and have not repented, your sins were not forgiven. It was not the blood that magically forgave the sin. It was God who lovingly forgave

²⁶⁴ Heb. 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

²⁶⁵ Heb. 10:4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

those who were in covenant with Him because they were being good kids who were simply not perfect.

God chose that blood to represent His way of life under the sacrificial system. You had to shed blood as a reminder that you were following His way of life and you had to do it the way God commanded. But the sacrifice of 10,000,000 lambs would not forgive one sin according to Paul.²⁶⁶ Therefore doing the sacrifice was nothing more and nothing less than an outward sign for the individual performing the sacrifice of what was supposed to be happening internally, at the person's very being, at their heart. This sacrifice was done for the person and not for God. If a sacrifice was done to honor God, with a contrite heart, then God forgave the person's sins, just as He forgave Nineveh when they truly repented. If the person was doing nothing more than putting on a show or even trying to pay God off, the person's sins were not forgiven. How much clearer does scripture have to be that sacrifices, no matter how valuable, do not forgive sins? Only God does.

Verses about the sacrifice of The Messiah

There are many verses in scripture referring to the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah. By and large people have simply taken these verses out of context. One of the verses most often taken out of context is Hebrews 9:22. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."²⁶⁷ Although we have touched on this verse, this verse will be more thoroughly examined in light of how the shedding of the blood of Jesus the Messiah on the cross fulfilled the same role as three distinct sacrifices defined in scripture. The fulfilling of these roles by Jesus were designed to show us the kind of God YHVH actually is. John 3:16 has been perverted from showing God's love for us into supposedly showing His wrath towards us by turning the sacrifice of Jesus into a payment for sin, something that the three scriptural sacrifices that foreshadowed the crucifixion of Jesus, never did. And if the sacrifices that referenced and foreshadowed the sacrifice of the Messiah never forgave sins, then why would the sacrifice of Jesus forgive sins?

²⁶⁶ Heb. 10:4

²⁶⁷ Heb. 9:22

Jesus, the True Passover

The first of the three roles that Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled was as the true Passover. Paul wrote, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."²⁶⁸ This author has written a complete book on Jesus' role as the true Passover,²⁶⁹ but the Passover is not nor was it ever a sin offering. The shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb did not fulfill any of the requirements for a sin offer and the requirements for this offering resemble those of thank offering. Thus the Passover sacrifice never played a role in the process of God forgiving His children's sins. As Jeremiah wrote, "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."²⁷⁰ God commanded the Passover be sacrificed while the Israelites were still in Egypt, yet scripture also clearly shows this was not a sin sacrifice. It may surprise many Christians today, but many of the sacrifices made by the nation of Israel were not sin sacrifices.

Jesus, the ultimate Atonement sacrifice

Although Jesus was crucified at approximately the same time the Passover lambs were sacrificed, his sacrifice also fulfilled the role of the ultimate atonement sacrifice according to Paul in Hebrews 8-10. Before examining Paul's writings about atonement, we need to examine the Old Testament writings about atonement to put the atonement sacrifice in the proper context.

"And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it *is* most holy unto the LORD."²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ 1 Cor. 5:7

²⁶⁹ Jesus, the True Passover. Available at www.keepersoftheway.org

²⁷⁰ Jer. 7:21-3

²⁷¹ Ex. 30:10

The atonement sacrifice was most holy to YHVH and the entire sixteenth chapter of Leviticus is devoted to this most holy of sacrifices. No one was allowed to enter the holy of holies except the high priest, and then only once a year, on the day of atonement.²⁷² The high priest had to do a special sacrifice to cleanse himself and then put on special clothing.²⁷³ He then took two goats for the atonement sacrifice. One goat was to be slain as a sin sacrifice and its blood was to be used to symbolically cleanse the tabernacle.²⁷⁴ The other goat fulfilled the role of the scapegoat.²⁷⁵ “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat (*scapegoat*), and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”²⁷⁶ After the nation of Israel had completed all of these rituals according to God’s commands, God told the entire nation of Israel, His called out people, “For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the LORD.”²⁷⁷ On the day of atonement the entire nation of Israel knew their sins were borne away and forgiven by God. They were not forgiven by the atonement sacrifice nor by the fasting that was done on that day, but their imperfections were forgiven by a Father who loved them and with whom they wanted to covenant. And part of that covenant was God’s desire to make sure His children knew that He loved them, would do what was best them and would forgive them.

Forgiveness was not mystically and mysteriously granted by a propitiation sacrifice, which is what the atonement sacrifice was also known as. Paul is very clear that the atonement sacrifice did not forgive sins. “For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”²⁷⁸ The nation of Israel was already supposed to know that the sacrifices, the shedding of blood, did not forgive sins, as the prophets kept reminding them. Only God forgave sins and only

²⁷² Lev. 16:2

²⁷³ Lev. 16:3-7

²⁷⁴ Lev. 16:5-19

²⁷⁵ Lev. 16:8

²⁷⁶ Lev. 16:21-2

²⁷⁷ Lev. 16:30

²⁷⁸ Heb. 10:4

when His people repented and reconciled with Him. Therefore God forgave the nation of Israel of all their unknown sins (if you knew you had sinned against your brother and done nothing to rectify the situation, then you were not truly following God's covenant)²⁷⁹ on the day of atonement if they were in covenant with Him. This is not to suggest they needed to be perfectly in covenant with God just as to be a part of a family you don't have to be the perfect family member. After all, how many perfect fathers and mothers and children are there? Yet there are still plenty of functional and growing families that are held together in the covenant of family by love.

The atonement sacrifice was ordered by God because He wanted His people to know He was merciful and that, "As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us."²⁸⁰ The scapegoat portion of the atonement sacrifice being symbolically removed from camp let the people know that God forgives sins. YHVH forgave them, the same way any father forgives a child. The sins were not mystically transferred to the scapegoat when the high priest laid hands on it. Sins are actions that have been committed. Nothing more and nothing less. What matters is how we deal with those actions and the atonement sacrifice was supposed to let God's people know He dealt with those actions by giving forgiveness to His holy people. Paul wrote to let us know that the sacrifice of Jesus fulfilled the same role as the ultimate atonement sacrifice. Just as the symbolic confessing of sins over scapegoat portion of the atonement sacrifice did not magically transfer the sins of Israel to the scapegoat, our sins were not mystically and mysteriously transferred to Jesus when he was crucified. John the Baptist knew his cousin was to fulfill the role of the ultimate atonement sacrifice.

John wrote, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."²⁸¹ Just as the atonement goat symbolically took away the sins of the nation of Israel so they knew that YHVH had forgiven them, Jesus also symbolically takes away the sins of the entire world.

²⁷⁹ Matt. 5:23-4 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

²⁸⁰ Ps 103:12

²⁸¹ John 1:29

The apostle Paul writes about the atonement sacrifice throughout eighth and ninth chapter of Hebrews and he concludes, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”²⁸² The atonement sacrifice had to be made once a year to remind the nation of Israel that God forgave their sins, yet the sacrifice of Jesus, the only begotten son of God, only had to be done once because it was such a powerful reminder.

The apostle Peter agreed that Jesus was the ultimate atonement sacrifice. “For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”²⁸³

The second chapter of 1 Peter conveys Peter’s teaching and preaching to the apostolic church, and ultimately to us, that we should bear the wrong doings of others just as Christ endured the pain of the crucifixion, even though he had done nothing to deserve this kind of death. Peter writes in verse 21 that part of the reason for the crucifixion was leave us an example of how to act under these horrible situations. Even though Jesus was punished beyond what we see in the movies, being beaten to a pulp before he was taken out to die a horribly painful and what was supposed be a horribly embarrassing death, he did not sin or complain. Quite an example for Christians to follow.

²⁸² Heb. 10:12-4

²⁸³ 1Pet. 2:19-25

The word usually translated as iniquities in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *aw-vone'*, which is Strong's H5771. In the New Testament the Greek word often translated as iniquities is *hamartia*, Strong's G266. Although Peter may not have been the same kind of linguist or Torah scholar that Paul was, he knew scripture better than I ever will and probably better than anyone reading this. He knew what the atonement sacrifice did and what it did not do. Compare 1 Peter 2:24 with Lev. 16:21-2.

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.²⁸⁴

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.²⁸⁵

The atonement goat bears all the iniquities, all the sins, of the entire nation on him, just as Jesus did for the whole world. Of course the scapegoat did not have all of the sins that the nation of Israel had committed in the past year mystically transferred to it. This bearing of sins was symbolic. In like manner, Peter never meant to insinuate that Jesus mystically had all the sins ever committed by physical human beings transferred to him. The bearing of sins by the atonement sacrifice was symbolic and not literal. The symbolical of the atonement sacrifice let God's physical children know that He literally forgave their sins so they can no longer act as a barrier between God and His people and to mystically transfer sins from one being to another destroys the picture of how God forgives sins.

I have heard more than one Christian speculate that actually having the sins of the world thrust upon Jesus most have been more painful than the crucifixion itself. They have misinterpreted Matthew 27:46, where Jesus says, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

²⁸⁴ Lev. 16:21-2

²⁸⁵ 1 Pet. 2:24

me?”²⁸⁶ Christians have been taught for millennia that Jesus is surprised and shocked to find God the Father had to turning His back on His only begotten son while he was on the cross because the sins of mankind, even those that would not be committed until 2,000 years in the future, mystically and spiritually transferred onto him. Again, modern Christianity has turned God’s message on its head. Jesus is not relaying how much the father hates sin, so much so that he supposedly must turn His back on His son when His needs Him the most. This is the wrathful God of the current Christianity. The modern Christian church knows that Jesus was quoting Psalms 22:1, but it seems to ignore Jesus’ message from that psalm.

Psalms 22 is a messianic psalm. It goes into detail about punishment and degradation the messiah will have to endure to do God’s work. Psalms 22 even describes parts of the crucifixion,²⁸⁷ all the way down to what happened to Jesus’ clothes.²⁸⁸ When Jesus said, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,”²⁸⁹ he was clearly announcing clearly he was the Messiah. This announcement of his messiahship was something he had been very reticent to make for his entire life. Take a moment and read of all of Ps. 22 and you will see how the early church would have taken some of the last words of Jesus, Psalms 22, and used it as a victory chant for how the Messiah overcame and how we will be delivered to serve God. However, rather than using Psalms 22 to show God’s purpose for mankind, the modern church depends upon Matthew 27:46 to supposedly show God’s insatiable wrath towards sin. The Father’s wrath is supposedly so great that He supposedly had to turn His back on His sinless son when a whiff of sin supposedly came along. If God needs to turn His back on His sinless son, how do you suppose He feels towards you and me? That is not the God I read about in the scriptures.

²⁸⁶ Matt. 27:47 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

²⁸⁷ Ps. 22:16-7 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look [and] stare upon me.

²⁸⁸ Ps. 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Matt. 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

²⁸⁹ Matt. 27:47

Jesus' quoting of Psalms 22 should not, and I believe must not, be used to infer God turned away from His only begotten son when he was on the cross because that would mean Jesus' human mother, Mary, who obviously did not understand everything about Jesus' mission, would be a better parent than God the Father because she did not turn her back on him when he needed love. The idea that Jesus mystically "absorbed all of mankind's sin when he was on the cross leads people to treat the sacrifice of Christ as a sort of black box where all sin goes in and none comes out. Many Christians act as if their sins have no real consequences because Jesus has already borne them all for us. This can and has led to the heretical idea that we should sin more so that grace may abound even more. God has made clear that sacrifices were never wanted and they did not to pay for sin. What God wanted was for the sin to never happen in the first place. We were made good, just the way God wanted us made, but we were not made perfect.²⁹⁰ God knew that if we sinned, but still maintained our covenant relationship with Him, He could and would forgive our sins. This does not mean there are not physical repercussions for sin. Adam and Eve had to vacate Eden and none of their children were ever allowed back in as a direct result of their sin.²⁹¹ But God still worked with mankind because we are His children.

John the Baptist's teachings also led to the remission of sins

John the Baptist was Jesus' older cousin. He came from a priestly line and was given the job of a prophet while still in the womb. Those who followed his teachings about returning to God's covenant by repenting also had their sins forgiven. Although the nation of Judah was under the Old Covenant when Jesus strode the earth, the Gospels emphasize that repentance was the ingredient needed for forgiveness of sins, which is the message of the entirety of scripture.

This was John's commission.

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in*

²⁹⁰ Gen. 1:31

²⁹¹ Gen 3:22-4

the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.²⁹²

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”²⁹³

“Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”²⁹⁴

There is no doubt that Jesus’ ministry was greater than John’s.²⁹⁵ But Jesus himself stated that John the Baptist was the greatest prophet of all time.²⁹⁶ And John’s ministry was to teach Israel to repent so they could receive the remission of sins. Just as when Nineveh repented, its sins forgiven. Just as God begged Judah to truly repent during the time of Jeremiah. Jesus even lamented, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!”²⁹⁷ Repentance is required for forgiveness and God lists the things that we have to repent of in scripture if we wish to remain in covenant with Him. If we do our part and repent of the things we know we are doing wrong, even if that repentance is not perfect, God will do His part and forgive all of our sins. The New Covenant was designed so that we are reminded daily about this forgiveness rather than annually. Jesus the Messiah fulfilled the role of the true and absolute atonement sacrifice.

God can even Forgive Sins done in Ignorance

Do we believe some of Jesus’ last words? “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”²⁹⁸ God’s holiness and righteousness is expressed to His children in the 10 commandments.

²⁹² Luke 1:76-80

²⁹³ Mark 1:4

²⁹⁴ Luke 3:2-4

²⁹⁵ John 1:27

²⁹⁶ Matt. 11:11

²⁹⁷ Matt. 23:37

²⁹⁸ Luke 23:34

Just as the law of gravity has consequences, whether you know about it or not, so do the laws of God. Forgiveness is not about avoiding consequences. It is about restoring relationships.

I still remember when my twin boys were just about a year and a half old. They had only been walking for a little over half a year. Yet somehow they found the strength to work together and began to push our love seat out into the living room, facilitated by freshly cleaned wooden floors. They began to do their baby laugh and my wife and I looked at each other and in the midst of our laughter, we told each other we were in such trouble. We had never told them not to push the love seat around the floor, so although they were breaking our law about not pushing furniture around the floor and scratching it, there was no need for forgiveness on our part because they did not have a guilty conscience that required repentance and forgiveness. It is likely the penalty for pushing furniture around the room, which was scratching the floor, still had to be paid. But forgiveness is needed to repair relationships, not scratched floors, and what they had done in ignorance didn't hurt our relationship in any way.

In like manner, it may never have entered a parent's mind that their 1 year old toddler, who does not know gravity will affect them, would crawl out of their crib, so they have not taught them it is wrong, at least not yet. Yet when this emboldened child decides to venture forth by climbing over the bars of the crib, gravity does affect them. And there may be serious consequences to breaking this law because of gravity's effects. The idea that a parent would have to forgive a child who acted in ignorance because it had now learned the lesson of the law of gravity is ridiculous on its face. A parent would help the child recover from the effects of its adventure, but forgiveness would not be needed in the process of recovery.

God Himself decided that He would only covenant with the offspring of Israel and those who would give up their ancestry and for all intents and purposes become the offspring of Israel for almost a millennium and a half. A major part of God's plan was to have this covenant people bring forth The Messiah who would again make God's covenant available to all of mankind. Of that time, Paul told the Athenians, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to

repent.”²⁹⁹ The Greek word translated winked in Acts 17:31 is *hupereido*. This is the only place this word is used in scripture, but most modern translations render this word as overlooked. God did not actively punish the gentiles for worshipping idols because He had left them in ignorance until the time of The Messiah. Paul writes about this ignorance. “For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”³⁰⁰

Does that mean that if you are ignorant of the law, there are no consequences? Ask the toddler who fell out of the crib if there were no consequences from falling on the floor. Or better yet, ask the apostle Paul who answers that question in the very next verse. “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”³⁰¹ Violating laws, even in ignorance, often incurs consequences that are inherent in violating these laws, but forgiveness is not required because the violator simply did not know what they were doing. As a parent, I know this for a fact and scripture says that our Father treats ignorance the same way.

God forgives those who repent and does not require a sacrifice or penalty to give that forgiveness, as the book of Jonah clearly teaches. God even forgives those who violate His laws in ignorance. Laws are laws and sometime require a payment to be made, but forgiveness is not about penalties, but about relationships. Forgiveness is given so people can move forward and not dwell in the past. If you are ignorant of your sin, guilt over that sin is not hindering your path towards God. But guilt is a killer of holiness, which is why God forgives sins in His holy people.

Jesus' Sacrifice ratified the New Covenant

The third role Jesus's sacrifice played in the plan of God was the ratification of the New Covenant. The ratification of a covenant is a very different procedure from the ordinances of a sacrifice, any sacrifice. The word for covenant in the Greek is *diathēkē*. I have to agree with many authors that the idea that a testament was actually just a contract or a covenant has been

²⁹⁹ Acts 17:30-1

³⁰⁰ Rom. 5:13

³⁰¹ Rom. 5:14

blurred since the time of King James. I believe Christians would have a better idea of how God was working with mankind if the two divisions of scriptures were labeled Old Covenant and New Covenant rather than Old and New Testament. The reason why this blurring is important will become evident as we examine what New Covenant is. Before looking at the New Covenant in the New Testament, we should examine what the Old Covenant was and how it was ratified so we can better understand the New Covenant.

What was the purpose of the Old Covenant? “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”³⁰² How did Israel become a kingdom of priests?

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.³⁰³

As recently as a hundred years ago covenants were still signed by men becoming blood brothers with the shedding and co-mingling of blood. The Israelites entered this contract or covenant voluntarily at Mount Sinai, but once they entered the Old Covenant, their children and their children’s children and so forth were part of the covenant. The Old Covenant had to be ratified with blood, just as any important contract of that time had to be signed with blood. Once ratified, it forged a relationship between a holy people and their God who forgave their sins.³⁰⁴ Paul

³⁰² [Exo 19:5-6](#)

³⁰³ [Exo 24:3-8](#)

³⁰⁴ Deut. 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

wrote about the ratification of the Old Covenant in Hebrews 9:15-22. “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”³⁰⁵

As I have pointed out many times in the paper, many Christians know that Paul wrote that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin,³⁰⁶ but they have mistakenly assumed that Paul was teaching Jesus’ blood was required for the remission of sins when he wrote, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”³⁰⁷ It was common knowledge among the Jews at the time of Jesus it was not the shedding of blood that forgave sins. They knew scripture stated, “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”³⁰⁸ However, the blood being referred to by Paul in Hebrews 9:15-22 is the blood that was used to ratify the Old Covenant, the blood used by Moses in Exodus 24. This blood was shed so it could be sprinkled on the Israelites and the tabernacle and this sprinkling is led to the forgiveness of sins. Exodus 24 shows it was not the shed blood that forgave sins, but that God forgave the sins of Israel because they were now in covenant with Him because of the sprinkling of the blood. What did the “sprinkling” of Jesus’ blood accomplish, according to Paul in Hebrews 8-10? He wrote this sprinkling ushered in the New Covenant, prophesized by Jeremiah. If we are not in covenant with God, there can be no remission of sin, with a few notable exceptions like the nation of Nineveh at the time of Jonah and the Samaritan women by the well.³⁰⁹ Remember that

Exo 34:6-7 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.

Jer. 36:3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

³⁰⁵ Heb. 9:19-22

³⁰⁶ Heb. 10:4

³⁰⁷ Heb. 9:22

³⁰⁸ Luke 5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

³⁰⁹ John 4:7-29

forgiveness is a relational thing that allows us to continue down our path of life rather than dwelling in the quagmire of guilt about our past sins. What makes these few exceptions so notable is that they were examples of true repentance, which is usually only accomplished by joining the covenant. Thus the pattern is set that true repentance, without any payment or penalty or shedding of blood is what God requires to forgive us. Nothing more and nothing less.

The blood used to ratify the New Covenant was from the Messiah himself according to scripture.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.³¹⁰

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.³¹¹

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.³¹²

The blood of Jesus had to be shed to ratify the New Covenant.³¹³ Barnes writes, “**In my blood -** Through my blood; that is, this new compact is to be sealed with my blood, in illusion to the ancient custom of sealing an agreement by a sacrifice.”³¹⁴ That covenant, as Jesus said, was for many people and the remissions of their sins. Repentance for Christians means going to God to ask for forgiveness. So of course, the shedding of Jesus’ blood was the turning point in mankind’s relationship with God because it changed everything when the veil was torn

³¹⁰ [Luk 22:20](#)

³¹¹ [Mar 14:23-4](#)

³¹² [Mat 26:27-8](#)

³¹³ Heb. 8:8-13 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

³¹⁴ Barnes notes from 1Cor. 11:25

asunder.³¹⁵ This symbolized the prophesied access of all mankind to God the Father. Because of the shedding of Jesus' blood, the whole world is redeemed because now gentiles can enter into covenant with God, just as the prophets said they would be able to.³¹⁶ Thus the third and final role fulfilled by Jesus when he was sacrificed was to ratify the New Covenant between man and God with his own blood.

The results of the New Covenant

What is the New Covenant? Paul explains not only what the New Covenant is, but why God knew it would be necessary in Hebrew 8. "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this *is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*"³¹⁷

God is merciful and forgives sin under the Old Covenant. God is merciful and forgives sins under the New Covenant. The difference between the Old and New Covenant is that under the New Covenant it will be God that writes the laws into the hearts of the people that are in

³¹⁵ [Mat 27:51](#) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

[Mar 15:38](#) And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

[Luk 23:45](#) And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

³¹⁶ [Isa 2:3](#) And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

[Gen 3:15](#) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

³¹⁷ [Heb. 8:8-13](#)

covenant with Him rather than the parents.³¹⁸ It will be God who will work with His people's hearts rather than allowing the priest to do that job.³¹⁹ The two great commandments of the New Covenant were expressed by Jesus in the 22nd chapter of Matthew. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."³²⁰ Of course Jesus was simply restating the two great commands of the Old Covenant in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.³²¹

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.³²²

³¹⁸ Deut. 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

³¹⁹ **Deu 6:5** And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Deut. 11:1 Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.

Deut. 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Deut. 10:12-3 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Deut. 11:22 For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

Deut. 19:9 If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

Deut 30:16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Lev. 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

³²⁰ Matt. 22:37-40

³²¹ Deut. 6:4-5

³²² Lev. 19:18

At the first Pentecost of the New Covenant, Peter gave one of the greatest sermons of all time. He was speaking to observant Jews who had come for the least of the three major feasts, the feast of weeks. Upon hearing Peter's sermon, these Jews, "when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"³²³ What was the obvious sin of these Jews? Their un-belief that Jesus was the promised messiah. So, then "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."³²⁴ Peter taught in the temple on the first Pentecost of the Christian Church that the New Covenant was now in effect. Peter taught to receive the promised forgiveness of sins, the people of God had to repent of their disbelief that Jesus was the Messiah. This is what God has always taught and always promised. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."³²⁵

Paul also wrote extensively about the role of Jesus in redemption via joining the New Covenant. "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference."³²⁶ God is patient and wants us to repent so He can forgive us and all of this is made possible by us joining the New Covenant, which is made possible by the blood of Jesus the Messiah.

Paul wrote about the human condition and how God wanted it to change for the better because He is our father. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that

³²³ Acts 2:37

³²⁴ Acts 2:38

³²⁵ [Act 10:43](#)

³²⁶ Rom. 2:2-4

are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”³²⁷ God has made the New Covenant available because of His patience. That New Covenant, only made possible by the shedding of His only begotten son’s blood to ratify this contract, was done so all of mankind can be justified and forgiven of their sins by God.

Jesus Mediates the New Covenant

Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant. He talked face to face with God. He delivered the frame work of God’s covenant to Israel and then helped the people apply this covenant by judging between them. Jesus the messiah is the mediator of the New Covenant. “For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”³²⁸ What did Jesus mediate? “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”³²⁹ Why did he mediate this covenant? “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”³³⁰ And what qualified him to be this mediator? “And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.”³³¹ Jesus mediates the New Covenant because his blood was shed to ratify it.

What is the role of a mediator? The Greek word for mediator is *mesites*, Strong’s 3316, which come from G3319, whose definitions are “a *go between*, that is, (simply) an *internunciator*, or (by implication) a *reconciler (intercessor)*: - mediator.”³³² Galatians expounds and expands the scriptural role of a mediator. “Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by

³²⁷ Rom. 3:23-6

³²⁸ 1Ti 2:5

³²⁹ Heb 8:6

³³⁰ Heb 9:15

³³¹ Heb 12:24

³³² E-Sword Strong’s 3319

angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one. *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*”³³³

Galatians 3:19 is referencing Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God. Steven’s sermon in Acts 7, which Paul most certainly heard, makes reference to this pivotal event in the history of Israel. Barnes explanation is almost certainly correct about what transpired when the law was given. “Hence, it has been supposed to mean that the Law was given ‘amidst’ the various ranks of angels, being present to witness its promulgation. Others suppose that the angels were employed as agents or instruments to communicate the Law. All that the expression fairly implies is the former; that the Law was given amidst the attending ranks of angels, as if they were summoned to witness the pomp and ceremony of giving ‘law’ to an entire people, and through them to an entire world”³³⁴

In Deut. 5:5, before Moses lists the ordinances of the Suzerain treaty that Israel would enter into with God, he reminds them, “I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew (*nagad*) you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount.”³³⁵ How did Moses show them the law, the word of God? Strong’s defines the Hebrew word *nagad* is “properly to *front*, that is, stand boldly out opposite; by implication (causatively), to *manifest*; figuratively to *announce* (always by word of mouth to one present); specifically to *expose, predict, explain, praise*: - bewray, X certainly, certify, declare (-ing), denounce, expound, X fully, messenger, plainly, profess, rehearse, report, shew (forth), speak, X surely, tell, utter.”³³⁶ Scripture defines Moses’ job as mediator of the Old Covenant. He mediated it by getting in front of God’s called out people and explaining the covenant of YHVH. This mediation did not entail him standing between God and His people. It was the people of Israel who wanted someone to stand between them and God. “And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the

³³³ Gal 3:19-21

³³⁴ Barnes notes, from e-sword on Act 7:53

³³⁵ Deut. 5:5

³³⁶ Deut 5:5

people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.”³³⁷ God may have allowed Moses to stand between Him and Israel, just as he allowed Israel to have a king, but that was not part of God’s covenant and was not what He wanted. Moses role as mediator was to explain and expound the covenant in the context of the law just as Jesus role as mediator is to explain the covenant in the context of the law. Placing anyone or anything between us and our Father hinders the personal relationship He desires and we need.

Throughout the sermon on the mount, Jesus taught about the New Covenant that he would mediate. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”³³⁸ He expounded the intent of God’s law. Of course you were not to murder, but what were you supposed to learn from this? “That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”³³⁹ The pagans said rote prayers to their false gods as homage. This idea of paying homage to the real God of the universe had seeped into Judaism, as demonstrated by the 18 benedictions whose roots can be traced back to the time of Jesus. And as mediator of the New Covenant, what did Jesus teach? “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”³⁴⁰ Talk to your Dad in heaven as you would talk to your dad on earth. Zeus and Baal may require vain repetition, but the real God requires a real conversation.

Jesus’s role was one of mediator or teacher or translator of the New Covenant, not as an intercessor between man and God. There are 4 verses that translate the Greek word *entugchano* as intercession. The Strong’s definition of *entugchano* is, “From G1722 and G5177; to chance

³³⁷ Ex. 20:19-20

³³⁸ Matt 5:17-8

³³⁹ Matt. 5:22-4

³⁴⁰ Matt. 6:7

upon, that is, (by implication) confer with; by extension to entreat (in favor or against): - deal with, make intercession.”³⁴¹ Thayer’s has 4 main definitions for *entugchano*. “(1) to light upon a person or a thing, fall in with, hit upon, a person or a thing 2) to go to or meet a person, especially for the purpose of conversation, consultation, or supplication 3) to pray, entreat 4) make intercession for any one.”³⁴² The NAS New Testament Lexicon defines *entugchano* as “(1) to light upon a person or a thing, fall in with, hit upon, a person or a thing (2) to go to or meet a person, esp. for the purpose of conversation, consultation, or supplication (3) to pray, entreat (4) make intercession for any one.”³⁴³

All of the places where *entugchano* is used in the New Testament are listed below.

And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt (*entugchano*) with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.³⁴⁴

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession (*entugchano*) for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.³⁴⁵

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession (*entugchano*) for the saints according to *the will of God*.³⁴⁶

Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession (*entugchano*) for us.³⁴⁷

God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession (*entugchano*) to God against Israel, saying,³⁴⁸

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession (*entugchano*) for them.³⁴⁹

³⁴¹ From e-sword, Strong’s Greek 1793

³⁴² From e-sword, Thayer’s Greek 1793

³⁴³ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/entugchano.html>

³⁴⁴ Acts 25:24

³⁴⁵ Rom 8:26

³⁴⁶ Rom 8:27

³⁴⁷ Rom 8:34

³⁴⁸ Rom 11:2

³⁴⁹ Heb 7:25

The intercession of Jesus and the holy spirit with God's holy called out people as described in scripture is not the kind of mysterious intercession the Catholic Church envisions with Mary beseeching Jesus, who supposedly would never turn his mother down, to forgive our sins. Although going through Mary is not an absolute requirement for forgiveness to be granted in the Catholic Church, it is supposed to be done because man is supposedly so sinful that he would have hard time getting his older brother to forgive him, never mind directly approaching the our Father. The Catholic view of intercession stresses a fallen mankind that is so frail and weak and evil that God does not truly understand us and would punish us as we deserved without this intercession and a penalty being paid. This idea of intercession has led Christians to actually tell me that they were nothing but pond scum in God's eyes. Pond scum that requires intercession can't grow up and become a mature and fully functional servant of God and they usually do not. But a child of God needs a teacher to help explain Torah and holiness and that is the role Jesus the Christ and the holy spirit fulfill as intercessor/mediator. As Acts 25:24 shows, *entugchano* is best translated as communicating or dealing with, just as Jesus communicated the will of God to be holy as He is holy at the sermon on the mount.

In Romans eight, Paul describes in details the process and the glory of putting off the old man and putting on the on the new man. In that process, the holy spirit works with and directly communicates with us, just as Jesus promised it would. He taught, "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."³⁵⁰ And Paul is teaching the same thing in Romans 8.

In Romans 11:2, the intercession is Elijah communicating his case against Israel. And in Hebrews 7:25 Paul compares and contrasts how the high priest made intercession for the nation of Israel with God on the day of Atonement to Jesus' intercession by giving himself as the atonement sacrifice.

The ongoing intercession of Jesus is nothing more than the continuation of Jesus' mission to mankind as explained in the gospels. Jesus revealed in more detail the glory of God's covenant

³⁵⁰ John 14:26

with His children. He extended this covenant, which Jesus now mediates, to all of mankind. And the holy spirit continued the teaching that Jesus so forcefully revealed at the sermon on the mount. This intercession is not about intervention between the Father and His children.

Verses Typically used to “Prove” Jesus’ Shed Blood is What Forgives Sin

Col. 1:14

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins”³⁵¹

Taken out of context, Col. 1:14 looks like it is the blood of Jesus the Christ that forgives sins, but in context, this verse is about how we enter into covenant with God and the results of that covenant. And we know it is the shed blood of Jesus that allows us to enter the New Covenant.

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.”³⁵² How were we made partakers of the light and delivered from darkness? By entering into the New Covenant, which is made possible by the ratifying blood of Jesus the Messiah.³⁵³

We used to be a part of this world, but we are now a part of the kingdom of His son. What does it mean that we are now a part of the kingdom of His son? “But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”³⁵⁴ But of course we know that Peter was simply quoting Exodus 19 where Israel was informed their covenant was designed to make them a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. Christians also become a kingdom of priests, obtaining mercy and forgiveness of sins by joining God’s

³⁵¹ Col 1:14

³⁵² Col. 1:12-4

³⁵³ Col. 1:12-4

³⁵⁴ **1Pe 2:9-10**

covenant, the New Covenant. A quick examination of other translations of Col. 1: 14, listed below, shows what the real cause and effect leading to the forgiveness of sins.

“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”³⁵⁵

“by whom we have redemption and remission of sins”³⁵⁶

“in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.”³⁵⁷

“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”³⁵⁸

“in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.”³⁵⁹

Many of these translations do not have the phrase “through his blood” because this phrase is not in a number of the manuscripts. However, there is no doubt that the phrase “through his blood” is used in Eph. 1:7, which we will examine next. But the idea Paul is communicating in Col. 1:14 is that our sins are forgiven because we have been redeemed. And we are redeemed because we no longer in the in the darkness of the world, but in the light of the New Covenant. As Eph. 1:7 agrees, we have been redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus and that redemption came about when we became part of the New Covenant.

Ephesians 1:7

Col. 1:14 states, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.”³⁶⁰ Paul is expounding this train of thought in the first chapter of Ephesians. Ephesians 1:3-8 states,

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption

³⁵⁵ Col 1:14 ESV

³⁵⁶ Col 1:14 Murdock

³⁵⁷ Col 1:14 ASV

³⁵⁸ Col 1:14 Darby

³⁵⁹ Col 1:14 RV

³⁶⁰ Col. 1:14

through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.³⁶¹

We have been predestined to have God truly become our Father since before the foundation of this age. What does this predestination enabled? “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”³⁶² God’s plan was to adopt all of mankind as His children, just as Roman emperors would adopt the best of the best as their children to continue their line. The adoption process was planned from the beginning, as is written in Genesis 3:15.³⁶³ In God’s wisdom and prudence He has redeemed us to Him via the New Covenant, which is made possible and ratified by the shedding of His only begotten son’s blood. If we remain in that glorious covenant we will enjoy the forgiveness of all of our sins. This is quite a promise and quite a gift from God. And this gift has been overlooked or misunderstood for a very long time. Ephesians 1:3-8 is about how Jesus’ shed blood was used to ratify the covenant. These verses have nothing to do with a sin sacrifice, thus they should never be construed as conveying some mystical process where Jesus’ shed blood forgave sins.

Roman 5:8-9

Romans 5:5-10 states,

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Eph. 1:3-8

³⁶² Rev 13:8

³⁶³ [Gen 3:15](#) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

³⁶⁴ Rom 5:5-10

Paul is writing about what we were like before we entered the New Covenant in Romans 5. We were sinners. We were like the son who had turned into a drug addict, began to steal to support his habit and then stole from the home he was raised in, beating up his brothers on the way out just to get money to support his habit. And what was God's answer to this problem? Just like with the prodigal son, the father misses his son and wants him to come to his senses and return. When the father sees his wayward son returning, he knows this prodigal son has changed, has repented, and this is welcomed. There is often a physical price to be paid for leading a life of sin, but God the Father makes it easy for us to come back to Him once we have seen the truth and want to follow His way of life. He does not put obstacles up that would hinder us from entering His holiness.

God opened the door wide under the New Covenant, changing the way mankind could covenant with him, making it open to all nations. And God did that while we were still sinners. He did it because of John 3:16, which is overused because it is misused. But John 3:16 tells us why God had to sacrifice his only begotten son to commence the New Covenant. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."³⁶⁵ This is a hard concept to accept, especially for legalist who place emphasis on the law over the love of God. Mankind, by and large, does not believe God loves them as a Father loves His children. God the lawgiver supposedly can't forgive sins because He must be paid a penalty for His broken laws. Even the Jews, who are often and justly accused of worshipping the law over God, understand that God does not require payment for each broken law. What God requires is a broken and contrite heart. What God requires is repentance. What God desires is a personal relationship with us as we grow into His image. What God desires is to be a proud Father whose children follow in His footsteps.

Paul writes that we were justified and redeemed back to God with the blood of Jesus. But it is not the blood that redeems and justifies. It is the process which that blood empowers that leads to forgiveness and holiness. The blood of Jesus was used to ratify the New Covenant, the instrument used to allow us to return to and have a real father/child relationship with the creator of the universe. If God was willing to do that while we were His enemies, think of what He will

³⁶⁵ John 3:16

do for us, given that He has already resurrected His only begotten son. Yes, Jesus died for us while we were sinners and His shed blood was required for the New Covenant to be ratified so that every single human being has the opportunity to have a one on one relationship with God under the terms God created when He made us physical beings in His image, either now or in the second resurrection.

The shed blood of Jesus is central to the point Paul was making in Romans 5. However, that point is not that Jesus' blood was used to forgive sins, but that blood was used to ratify the New Covenant so everyone in covenant with God would know that God was the forgiver of sins.

1 John 1:7

1 John 1:7 seems to argue against this author's contention that it is God the Father that forgives sins and the shedding of blood, especially the blood of Jesus, is not what forgives sins. John wrote, "and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."³⁶⁶ If you examine this partial verse out of context, it does seem to say that blood of Jesus actually cleanses us of our sins in some mysterious, mystical way. However, Peter wrote about the dangers twisting of scripture, especially Paul's epistles, by taking them out of context. "As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."³⁶⁷ The context of 1 John 1 is John juxtaposing the darkness of our life before we had a personal relationship with God to how we have entered the light when we joined the New Covenant, a process made possible because Jesus' blood ratified this covenant.

John begins his epistle by writing,

(For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we

³⁶⁶ 1 John 1:7

³⁶⁷ 2 Peter 3:16

have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.³⁶⁸

John emphasizes that what he is saying is true and the greatest joy we could have is to have true fellowship, a personal covenant relationship with God and Jesus, just as he has. We should be ecstatic about that relationship and the blessings it brings.

John then goes on to write the same thing Paul wrote about in Col. 1. They write we used to be in darkness because we were part of this world, but we are now in the light because if we are part of the New Covenant with God. If we continue to walk in the ways of this world, if we do not change, if we do not repent, then we are liars if we say we are in covenant with God.

We are cleansed from all our sins because of the shed blood of Christ, not just as a one-time thing, but on an on-going basis. If you only had the epistle of 1 John, it might be easy to dismiss the idea of John's writing about darkness and light as nothing but a metaphor, but when we examine the gospels, the Pauline epistles, the other general epistles and the book of revelations, which we will do shortly, then a clear pattern that emerges. The blood of Christ is essential in the forgiveness of sins, but it does not forgive sins. It is an essential part of the process because Jesus' blood ratified the New Covenant, the covenant that God is using to forge His called out people into a holy priesthood by bringing them out of the darkness of the world and into the light of His holy presence.

When we sin against another person, is there one magic event that leads to forgiveness or is it a process? Can we just take it for granted that the person is a Christian and they must forgive us?³⁶⁹ This is not how we operate and it is not how God operates. We know forgiveness is a

³⁶⁸ 1 John 1:2-10

³⁶⁹ Matt. 6:14-5 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

process. And the apostles wrote about how wondrous this process is. Although every human being is a child of God, most of mankind is caught in the darkness of not really knowing God. Even if you know of God, you do not know Him unless you approach Him as a father. And God created the New Covenant in such a way that we should have no choice but to know and accept Him as our loving Father if we are in covenant with Him. However, Christianity has bypassed this message by depending upon the mystical idea that God requires the payment of a penalty for many of our actions because He is so mad at us, yet that payment is somehow actually forgiveness, something that God the lawgiver supposedly requires. This idea that the payment of a penalty is required distorts who and what God is and this distorts our relationship with our Father. I am not suggesting an antinomian perspective.³⁷⁰ Far from it. As Paul writes over and over again, the law is good and just and holy. But we as human beings will violate that law and will require forgiveness from our Father for our shortcomings. I am suggesting this is not a mystical, mysterious process with penalties that must be paid by us, yet are not paid by us and said penalty is actually considered forgiveness. I am suggesting a theology where God is filled with wrath, yet somehow that wrath is actually loves distorts the true picture of who YHVH is and how He does things. I am suggesting we are forgiven by God in the same was we forgive our children.

Rev 1:5

Revelations 1:5, like the other verses examined so far, is really stating that God is working with us under the auspices of the New Covenant and this is made possible because Jesus' blood ratified the New Covenant.

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from

Matt. 18: 21-2 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

³⁷⁰ Antinomianism-The doctrine or belief that the Gospel frees Christians from required obedience to any law, whether scriptural, civil, or moral, and that salvation is attained solely through faith and the gift of divine grace. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/antinomianism>

our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.³⁷¹

Examine 1Pet. 2:9-10, Ex. 19:5-6 and 24:3-8 again. How do we become kings and priests of God, which is what Rev. 1-6 is talking about? We have to enter into covenant with God. How do you enter into covenant with God? By accepting the parameters of the New Covenant, which was only made possible because it was ratified with Jesus blood, as binding upon you John actually gives metaphoric details of how to do this by the wording he used. The Greek word translated as washed in verse five is *louō*, which means, “A primary verb; to *bathe* (the *whole* person; whereas G3538 means to wet a *part* only, and G4150 to wash, cleanse *garments* exclusively): - wash.”³⁷² John writes that we must be baptized in the blood of Jesus the Messiah to be kings and priests of the New Covenant whereas to be kings and priests of the Old Covenant you only had to be sprinkled with the ratifying blood.³⁷³

As you notice from the other translation of Revelation 1:5 listed below, we are made free from or washed from our sins because of the shedding of Jesus’ blood. We would not be part of the New Covenant without the shedding Jesus’ blood, thus we would still be in our sin.

and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood;³⁷⁴

even from Jesus Christ the Faithful Witness, the First-born out of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him loving us and washing us from our sins by His blood.³⁷⁵

and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood,³⁷⁶

³⁷¹ Rev. 1:5-6

³⁷² Strong’s Concordance from e-sword, G3638

³⁷³ Ex. 24: 8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

³⁷⁴ Rev. 1:5 RSV

³⁷⁵ Rev. 1:5 LITV

³⁷⁶ Rev. 1:5 ASV

And from Jesus Christ, the true witness, the first to come back from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who had love for us and has made us clean from our sins by his blood.³⁷⁷

May kindness and peace be yours from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness. Jesus was the first to conquer death, and he is the ruler of all earthly kings. Christ loves us, and by his blood he set us free from our sins.³⁷⁸

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born out of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth; to him who did love us, and did bathe us from our sins in his blood,³⁷⁹

and from Jesus Christ, the truthful witness, the first of the dead to be born to Life, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins with His own blood,³⁸⁰

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,³⁸¹

and from Jesus Christ, the witness, the faithful one, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.³⁸²

We have been freed from our sins by Jesus' blood because His blood allows us to become kings and priests in the New Covenant, which allows us to have a personal relationship with God the father, who has always forgiven sins when His children repent. Many theologians point out that this is the only place where we are washed by the blood of Jesus and supposedly, this mystical washing is what removes our sins.³⁸³ However they have ignored the possibility that John was

³⁷⁷ Rev 1:5 BBE

³⁷⁸ Rev 1:5 CEV

³⁷⁹ Rev 1:5 YLT

³⁸⁰ Rev 1:5 WNT

³⁸¹ Rev 1:5 Webster

³⁸² Rev. 1:5 ISV

³⁸³ Barnes Notes on Rev. 1:5 from e-sword **And washed us from our sins in his own blood** - He has removed the pollution of sin from our souls by his blood; that is, his blood has been applied to cleanse us from sin. Blood can be represented as having a cleansing power only as it makes an expiation for sin, for considered literally its effect would be the reverse. The language is such as would be used only on the supposition that he had made an atonement, and that it was by the atonement that we are cleansed; for in what sense could it be said of a martyr that he "had washed us from our sins in his blood?" How could this language be used of Paul or Polycarp; of Ridley or Cranmer? The doctrine that the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, or purifies us, is one that is common in the

communicating the idea that we have been metaphorically baptized, because *louō* means to immerse, by Jesus' blood to enter the New Covenant whereas Israel was sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats to enter the Old Covenant. Jesus' shed blood allowed him to obtain, "a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."³⁸⁴ So although Israel was, "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,"³⁸⁵ Christians have a better baptism, into Jesus' kingdom by his blood, according John. That baptism does not forgive sins. That baptism gives us a personal relationship with God the Father, who forgives sins.

1Cor 15:17

Paul writes, "In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God because we testified on God's behalf that he raised Christ-whom he did not raise if in fact it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless and you are still in your sins. Yes, even those who have died in Christ are lost."³⁸⁶

1 Cor. 15:15-18 is really very simple to understand if taken in context. Paul is rehearsing what he taught the Corinthians, who have strayed from the truth when they began to embrace other teachers' incorrect teachings. He lists his authority, even listing other disciples who agree with

Scriptures. Compare [1Jo 1:7](#); [Heb 9:14](#). The specific idea of washing, however - representing that blood as washing sin away - is one which does not elsewhere occur. It is evidently used in the sense of "cleansing" or "purifying," as we do this by "washing," and as the blood of Christ accomplishes in respect to our souls, what washing with water does in respect to the body.

and washed us from our sins in his own blood; which shows that these persons were loved before washed; they were not first washed, and then loved, but first loved, and then washed. Love was the cause of washing, and not washing the cause of love; hence it appears that they were in themselves filthy, and unclean through sin; and that they could not cleanse themselves by anything they could do; and that such was the love of Christ to them, that he shed his precious blood for them, which is a fountain opened, to wash in for sin, and which cleanses from all sin. This is to be understood, not of the sanctification of their natures, which is the work of the Spirit, but of atonement for their sins, and justification from them by the blood of Christ, whereby they are so removed, that they are all fair, and without spot. It is afterwards said, that these same persons are made priests; and it may be observed, that the priests were always washed, before they performed their service, as such (n). The Alexandrian copy and the Syriac and Arabic versions read, "and hath loosed us from our sins in", or "by his blood"; that is, from the guilt of them, which was bound upon them,

³⁸⁴ Heb. 8:6

³⁸⁵ 1 Cor. 10:2

³⁸⁶ 1 Cor. 15:15-8

him and are his friends. Paul is incensed that the Corinthians have embraced teachers who have gone so far as teaching there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Jesus is not resurrected. And if Jesus isn't risen, Paul writes, then I am a liar and everything I have taught you is a lie. And if Paul is a liar, then the death of Jesus is also worth nothing because Paul must be lying about that. So there is no New Covenant. If there is no New Covenant, then the Corinthians have no real relationship with God and they are still sinners because your sins can't be forgiven if you are not in covenant with God.

How does God deal with Sin?

God forgave the city of Nineveh when it repented. God forgave Israel and Judah on the rare occasions they repented. The first sermon of the New Covenant tells people to repent if they want their sins forgiven. God has made this forgiveness possible because He loves us.

I play many roles in my life. I am a provider for my family. I am a husband. I am an engineer. I am a bicycle rider. I am a basketball player. I am a Christian. What is my most important role, which I have not listed? Read on.

God plays many roles. He is the creator. He is the Lawgiver. He is a judge. He is our healer. But according to Him, His most important role is as a father to mankind. But mankind has generally rejected God as a father. There is no doubt the average Israelite treated YHVH like He was Baal or Dagon or some other false god who had to be appeased rather than respected, obeyed and loved. The average Christian treats YHVH like He is a god rather than our Father. Are we going to continue placing barriers between us and our Father because it is easier to treat Him like Zeus, an angry god requiring penalties and reparations or will we repent and go to ask Dad if He will forgive us and walk with us and continue to teach us how to be more like Him. God said, "I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; to love the LORD thy God, to hearken to His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for that is thy life, and the length of thy days."³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ Deut. 30:19-20 JPS

What does God require of us? We could make a list of things, like having a contrite heart, repenting of our wrongs, to lead a righteous life, to fear and love Him and more. But what does He really want? “And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”³⁸⁸ This is a father telling his kids he wants to be proud of them because they are good kids. “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; to love the LORD thy God, to hearken to His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for that is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”³⁸⁹

God creates the environment for his children to learn and grow. He encourages us to take “good” chances and discourages us from taking “bad” chances. He wants us to grow and mature and is disappointed if we don’t.³⁹⁰ Would we be happy and proud if our 10-year-old acted like a 2 year old? How about if your 30-year-old acts like he is 15? However, you should be happy if your 10-year-old acts like he is 10 years old. But would you be disappointed if your 10-year-old acted like he was 20? In most cases the answer to that should be yes because a 10-year-old would give up to much of the joy of life if he acted 20. I know I had to grow up fast to help my family when my parents divorced when I was 12 and although I have always “been mature for my age,” that has not always been for the best.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”³⁹¹ Far too many Christians seem prefer to believe the only way God could stand to be around us is if we are hidden behind the blood of Jesus, so when he looked at us, all He really sees is Jesus. This is exactly the kind of attitude that God

³⁸⁸ Deut 10:12

³⁸⁹ Deut. 30:11-2

³⁹⁰ Heb. 5:11- 4Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

³⁹¹ John 3:16

was fighting against when He had Jesus teach the words of John 3:16. But far too many Christians have turned the love of John 3:16 upside down by requiring God require a penalty for every sin we commit and denying God the ability to forgive us.

God loves each and every one of us so much that He always does the right thing for His kids. But if we treat Him like God and not like Dad by assuming He requires a penalty be paid for every sin we commit by taking away His ability to forgive us, we can't have the kind of relationship He wants with us. We are the ones that stand in the way of that relationship. God loves all of His children and He wants to be proud of every son and daughter He has because they have become holy as He is holy. The early church was holy and their dad helped them change the world.

If we treat God like Dad, it means we have to do the work of growing up to be a holy son or daughter He can be proud of. Growing up can be awfully hard work, but it certainly beats the alternative. But we are the workmanship of God and our job, which we can only do with God's help, is to grow up to be sons and daughters God can be proud of.³⁹² And being an adult has its advantages, especially when you have dad like YHVH.

³⁹² Is. 29:23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

Rom. 14:20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.