

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 39 – GREAT EXCHANGE]

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***So far in this series we have talked about the amazing lengths God has gone to, through the saving work of Jesus Christ, to restore mankind's relationship with God.***

- ◆ We started by speaking about how God the Logos, humbled himself by setting aside His heavenly glory and joining humanity as one of us.
- ◆ We learned when Jesus became incarnate, He assumed our fallen human nature in order to wrestle it to the ground, defeat it and restore it to God's original intention.
- ◆ We spoke about how Jesus was baptised in order to represent us through all aspects of his life, not just his death.
- ◆ In other words, he lived for us, he worshiped for us, He trusted the Father for us, He lived a perfect righteous life for us.
- ◆ We saw Jesus confronting the devil and overcoming the evil spiritual forces holding mankind captive in order to institute the kingdom of God.
- ◆ He chose twelve disciples for the embryonic formation of the church.
- ◆ He announces the arrival of the new age, the age of redemption by healing the sick, calming the elements, casting out demons, raising the dead and forgiving sin.
- ◆ He taught the ruling principles of the kingdom of God with his teachings and parables to show salvation was obtained through grace, not through obedience to the law, which is an impossibility for human beings.
- ◆ We saw how Jesus was born "under the law" in order to redeem those "under the law." Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant requirements from both the side of Israel and the side of God.
- ◆ At the last supper, Jesus introduces the New Covenant which has real forgiving power as it is based on His sacrificed body and blood, not the body and blood of animals.
- ◆ This New Covenant included not just Israel but all of mankind as it also embraced the Abrahamic Covenant. It was through Abraham's seed (Jesus) that "all nations of the earth would be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).
- ◆ With Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we saw how the relationship between God and mankind changed forever.
- ◆ Rather than living under the condemnation of the law, mankind now lives under the free gift of grace.
- ◆ We saw how Jesus as the "predestined" one or the "elected" one willingly substituted himself in the place of guilty mankind to accept the wrath of God's just penalty against sin, so as forgiven children we could be adopted into the family of God.
- ◆ And finally we saw how Jesus went to that God-forsaken place called hell and died the second death so we wouldn't have to.

***I hope we're getting an accurate picture of who is responsible for our salvation. So far mankind has contributed nothing to the process. It is all from, and of, God. And here's another news flash, things aren't about to change.***

- ◆ The other important message to take away from what we have covered so far is to realise "Jesus" is the message.
- ◆ One cannot separate the work and the message of Jesus from the person.

***Now we need to step back and take a closer look at what Jesus' atoning work has accomplished so far.***

- ◆ As the word atonement or at-one-ment means, it is about restoring or reconciling broken relationships.
- ◆ On the one hand, we have the creator of mankind, a holy righteous God, and on the other, sinful human beings who have chosen to reject their Creator and go their own way.
- ◆ In order for there to be genuine reconciliation or at-one-ment, these two parties have to be brought together in such a way that God's holiness is not compromised, while sinful mankind has to acknowledge God's righteous judgment on their sinfulness so they can be made right with God and therefore be forgiven.

***How God chooses to do this is testimony to the love and grace our heavenly Father is willing to extend to his children so the two parties can be reconciled.***

- ◆ What we witness in Jesus' act of atonement is the fulfilment of a plan that originated prior to the creation of mankind and is alluded to in various stages of God's dealing with His people.
- ◆ In the atonement, we see the scripture fulfilled "***the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world***" (Revelation 13:8).
- ◆ It alludes back to Adam and Eve when God, after discovering their sin, spilled the blood of an animal and used their skins to cover them.

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- ◆ It refers back to God providing a ram to be sacrificed in the place of Abraham's son, Isaac.
- ◆ It refers back to the Passover when the blood of a lamb was slain and smeared on the doorposts so the death angel would "Passover" the occupants.
- ◆ And we see it enacted year after year in the nation of Israel in the annual Day of Atonement.
- ◆ All of these were a shadow of the reality God had planned to restore the relationship between Him and his rebellious children.
- ◆ In each case an animal is substituted in the place of the guilty party and bears the death penalty on their behalf.
- ◆ This is precisely what God planned to do with his own Son so atonement and reconciliation with sinful mankind became possible.

***The astonishing fact is, God chose to do this for us without requiring any reciprocal effort on our part and while we were still dead in our sins.***

- ◆ As we have learned so far, since sin entered the world, mankind has been doing his best to push God out of his life.
- ◆ We have also learned how totally incapable humanity is of obtaining the righteousness required by God's law.
- ◆ Furthermore, the closer the holy Son of God approached sinful mankind, the more their unrighteousness was exposed.
- ◆ And exposed to the extent that it led to the created, crucifying their Creator.
- ◆ But amazingly, it was in this very dreadful act of execution which exposed man's true wickedness that also enabled God to justify the ungodly.
- ◆ Because by crucifying the Son of God, His very death would allow God to release mankind from the wrath they deserved.
- ◆ ***Romans 5:6,8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***
- ◆ Through His death on the cross, Jesus had substituted Himself as the focal point of God's final judgment on the world and ended the conflict between God and humanity.
- ◆ As the death penalty had been paid for by their Creator this in turn allowed God to then extend grace and forgiveness to the ungodly.
- ◆ This action satisfied the demands of a holy God that the supreme penalty of death had to be paid in order for justice to be served, and subsequently so grace and forgiveness could be extended.

***However, there was still the necessary acknowledgement on the part of mankind of God's righteous judgment on their sinfulness before reconciliation was possible.***

- ◆ The fact we need to be justified is also an admission we are sinful, rebellious children, something the ungodly are loath to admit.
- ◆ By passively and willingly submitting Himself to the wrath of God's judgment on sin, Jesus on behalf of sinful mankind fulfilled this requirement.
- ◆ Earlier we spoke about Jesus throughout His life living up to the righteous requirements of the law on our behalf.
- ◆ Now we see this same righteous man willingly dying for us and in the process acknowledging God's right to punish our sinfulness.
- ◆ In other words, this is Christ repenting for us, acknowledging our sin and God's right to punish us for our sin.
- ◆ Don't make the mistake of thinking repentance is something we have come up with on our own.
- ◆ As with the rest of the salvation process, it has already been accomplished for us by Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Even our saving faith is not ours but Christ's, but that is getting ahead of the story (Romans 1:17).

***So when you put all this together, this is what leads to our being justified in God's eyes.***

- ◆ Justification is an interesting challenge for God in that the problem comes down to the simple question of, "How is God going to deal with the problem of sin without destroying the sinner?"
- ◆ As mentioned, a holy God requires justice for sinfulness and an acknowledgement on the part of the sinner of God's right to judge and punish his sinfulness.
- ◆ What Christ has accomplished through His atoning work has fulfilled the three requirements needed for justification.

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- ◆ 1) The death penalty demanded for the sin of the world has been satisfied through the death of the only One who was capable of fulfilling this role, the Creator of mankind, the Son of God who has joined Himself to mankind in His incarnation (Colossians 1:15-17, Mark 10:45).
- ◆ The justice then demanded by a holy God has been served.
- ◆ 2) With His passive obedience of going to the cross on our behalf, Jesus acknowledged our sinfulness and God's right to judge and punish this sinfulness.
- ◆ In other words, Jesus repented for us and acknowledged God's right to punish our sinfulness.
- ◆ 3) While Jesus bore the weight of the world's sin when He went willingly to the cross on our behalf, God in turn, now imputes the righteous life Jesus lived on our behalf to us so that we are now considered as righteous as Jesus Christ.
- ◆ **2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**
- ◆ This is called the "great exchange," the bargain of the cosmos. We gave Jesus our sin, and in return He gave us His righteousness.
- ◆ This righteousness of Christ that is credited to us is not just a nice way of tidying things up legally, it is an actual fact because we are united to Him through His incarnation in the same way we are united to Him in His death (2 Corinthians 5:14).

### ***It helps if we think of this in the context of the Old Covenant Day of Atonement.***

- ◆ The act the high priest performed as he administered the rituals of the atonement ceremony benefited the whole nation. It was a corporate event.
- ◆ He wore the twelve stones on his breastplate signifying his status in representing the whole nation (Exodus 28:29).
- ◆ The atonement proceedings centred around two goats.
- ◆ The first goat was sacrificed and its blood presented to God on behalf of the nation.
- ◆ This sacrifice allowed God to extend His grace to the people in an act of forgiveness, which was applied to the whole nation.
- ◆ The second goat was then taken out into the wilderness and released representing the important fact God no longer held their sins against them as He had forgiven them.
- ◆ In both cases, the whole nation benefited from God's act of grace.
- ◆ If we now go back to Romans 5 we witness this same scenario in the saving act of Jesus Christ but this time for the benefit of the whole human race.
- ◆ **Romans 5:18-19 Consequently, just as one trespass (Adam) resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act (Jesus) resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.**
- ◆ Through this process, Jesus acting as both high priest and the sacrificial goat, God has justified humanity which means mankind no longer needs to strive to somehow try to justify themselves.
- ◆ **Romans 3:21-24 But now apart from the law (the Old Covenant) the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (The law pointed to what was to come, a righteousness via the New Covenant) 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**
- ◆ So through the atoning work of Jesus we see the justice demands of a holy God satisfied and the appropriate response of sinful mankind acknowledging their sin and God's right to judge them.

### ***This is how God chooses to deal with the problem of sin. Man's attempts to attain the righteousness of God through the law and his own efforts will always result in abject failure.***

- ◆ Despite our best attempts to obtain righteousness by our own efforts it is foolishness to think it will survive God's holy judgment on our efforts.
- ◆ This stark fact is confirmed here in v.23, ***"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."***
- ◆ However, In our place our Savior, Jesus Christ, substitutes Himself to bear the divine judgment on sin.

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- ◆ Through Jesus, God steps out from behind the law and deals with mankind personally.
- ◆ And what do we see? A God of love and grace that has set us free from the “law of sin and death.”
- ◆ ***Romans 8:2-3 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh***
- ◆ And the good news of the gospel is, ***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).***