

THE GOSPEL LESSON 3 – BELIEVE IN JESUS – PART 2

INTRODUCTION

We've begun our study of The Gospel of Your Salvation anchored in the truth of Ephesians 1:13: "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." It is the message of truth that is from God that announces His grace to the world and offers eternal life through the person, work, and promise of Jesus Christ. We're in the middle of examining exactly what this gospel is, what it requires, and why it must remain clear and undefiled.

The gospel is not a call to a better life (to being moral), a religious system, or a vague hope. It is the announcement of good news centered on a Person. We are focusing on the content of that message. We are looking at three essential aspects in order:

1. Who Jesus Is – the identity of the One who brings salvation
2. What Jesus Has Done – the finished work that secures our redemption
3. What Jesus Promises – the certain gift given to the one who believes

Last week, we examined the first of these: the identity of Jesus Christ. To believe in Jesus one must believe in who He is. John wrote his Gospel with a clear purpose: "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). We saw that Jesus is the eternal Word who is God, the Creator, the Only Begotten God who explains the Father, the "I AM" – YHWH in the flesh, the Promised Messiah, the Son of God. Everything that follows rests upon the truth of His identity. Today we turn to the second essential aspect: what this Jesus has done on our behalf. The Scriptures present His work with unmistakable clarity so that no one need guess.

This is foundational. The Gospel announces not only who Jesus is but also what He accomplished and what He promises.

THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL PART 2 – WHAT JESUS DID

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29). For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

The Incarnation

Jesus left His abode and took on human flesh for one central reason: to save sinners. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

The Scriptures present the incarnation, the eternal Word becoming flesh, as the necessary and deliberate act of God to accomplish what no one else could. John opens his Gospel with the clear statement of identity and purpose: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became

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flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14). This was not an afterthought or a temporary visit. It was the planned entry of the Creator into His creation.

Jesus Himself stated His mission in Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” The lost is the spiritual death that entered through Adam (Romans 5:12). Hebrews explains the “why” in terms of identification and rescue: “Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ... Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:14-15,17). He became fully human, yet without sin, so He could represent us perfectly before the Father and die in our place.

Paul captures the humility and purpose in Philippians 2:6-8: “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” *Existing* (ὑπάρχω *huparchō*) shows He already was in possession of the divine nature when He “emptied” Himself. This is not a loss of deity but the voluntary setting aside of the independent exercise of divine privileges. He came to obey where Adam failed and to die where we deserved death.

John adds the love motive: “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10). The incarnation makes the invisible God visible and the perceived distant God near. It allows the eternal Son to become the Kinsman-Redeemer (a man, human who can redeem) who can pay our debt because He shares our flesh. Without the incarnation there is no true substitution, no high-priestly ministry, and no resurrection hope.

His Sinless Life

The requirement of sinlessness flows directly from the nature of God’s justice and the requirement of substitutionary sacrifice. A sinner cannot die for another sinner’s guilt; he must settle his own account. Scripture repeatedly declares Jesus’ absolute moral and Godly perfection so we can see why His death counts for us.

Hebrews states it plainly: “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The Greek preposition *without* (χωρίς *chōris*) is strong. It means having no association with, apart from. Jesus is untouched by sin in thought, word, or deed. Later

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the writer adds, “For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26).

Peter quotes Isaiah and applies it directly to Jesus: “Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22; cf. Isaiah 53:9). Paul’s summary of the cross makes the exchange possible only because of this reality: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The phrase “knew no sin” emphasizes that at no point did Jesus ever experience sin as His own.

If Jesus had possessed even one sin, He would have needed a sacrifice for Himself. The Old Testament sacrificial system required spotless animals precisely because any defect disqualified the offering (Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 22:19-25). The author of Hebrews contrasts the temporary animal sacrifices with Christ’s once-for-all offering: “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14). The phrase *without blemish* (ἄμωμος *amōmos*) is the same language used for the sacrifices in Leviticus 22.

The theological principle is substitution. A guilty substitute cannot remove guilt; he only adds to it. Jesus’ sinless life qualified Him to bear sins that were not His own. His death, therefore, was not payment for His own debt but a voluntary transfer of our entire guilt onto the only One who had none. The moment we believe, that completed transaction is credited to us. No ongoing works or additional payments are required because the Sinless One has already paid in full.

The Cross – Substitutionary Atonement

Sacrificial atonement is the divinely ordained means by which a holy God can forgive guilty sinners without compromising His justice. The foundation is stated early and repeated often: life must be given for life. Leviticus 17:11 declares, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.” Blood, representing sacrificial death, covers the guilt so that God’s wrath does not fall on the sinner.

This principle is rooted in God’s own character. He is perfectly just, so sin must be punished. He is perfectly loving, so He provides the substitute. Isaiah 53 unfolds the suffering Servant who “was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. ...But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering...” (Isaiah 53:5-6, 10). The guilt offering in the Old Testament was the sacrifice that dealt with rebellion. The Servant becomes that offering.

Paul explains how this satisfies God’s judgment in Romans 3:24-26: “...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed

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publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. ...for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” The key term “propitiation” is the same word used in the Septuagint for the mercy seat where the high priest sprinkled blood. Jesus is both the sacrifice and the place where wrath is turned away. God’s righteousness demanded punishment; the cross provided it. Because the penalty was fully paid by the Sinless One, God can now declare, impute the believer as righteous without lowering His standard.

Hebrews 9-10 drives the point home by contrasting the repeated animal sacrifices with Christ’s single offering. “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ...By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:4, 10). The old system could never pay for sin; it covered it for a time; Christ’s sacrifice takes away sin.

Why does this satisfy God’s judgment? Because the substitute was perfect, the payment was complete, and the wrath was exhausted on the cross. There is nothing left to punish. The one who believes receives the full benefit of that finished work. God’s justice is satisfied, His love is displayed, and the believer is declared righteous, once for all. This is the foundation upon which the entire gospel rests. When we believe the message of what Jesus has done, we are not hoping for a future verdict; we are resting in the verdict already rendered at the cross.

On the cross, Jesus took our place. He bore the punishment we deserved. This is the heart of the gospel, a sacrificial atonement.

- “He was pierced through for our transgressions... the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” (Isaiah 53:5-6)
- “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- “Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18)

When Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), the full payment for sin was complete.

The entire Bible tells one redemptive story. The Old Testament sacrificial system, the Passover lamb, the Day of Atonement, and Isaiah 53 all point to one person, Jesus. He is the true Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). His death was not an accident. It was the fulfillment of everything the Scriptures had been pointing to for centuries.

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The Resurrection

The death would have been meaningless without the resurrection. Paul includes the burial to show that Jesus really died, and the resurrection to show that God accepted the payment. “He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4). The resurrection is God’s public declaration that the sacrifice was sufficient. “He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25). Because He lives, we know the transaction is complete. Death could not hold the sinless One. Without the resurrection, our faith would be worthless (1 Corinthians 15:17).

The Result for Us

Because of what Jesus did:

- Our sins can be fully forgiven.
- We can be declared righteous before a holy God.
- We are reconciled to the Father.

How This Impacts Salvation

The Gospel is the announcement of this finished work. When a person hears the message of truth and believes it, something decisive takes place. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 – Notice the order in the gospel announcement: Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He was raised. These are objective facts. They do not depend on our feelings or our performance. They happened outside of us and on our behalf.

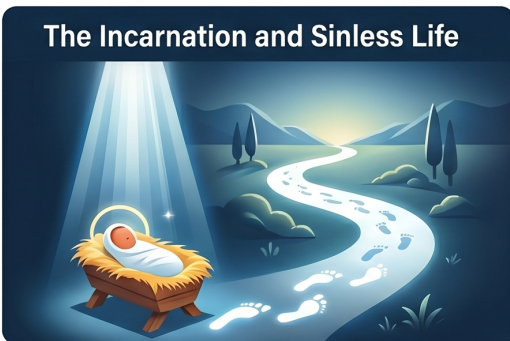
This is why when a person believes the Gospel they are saved instantly. There is nothing left to add. Jesus has done everything necessary. The one who believes receives the benefit of His finished work. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). We are not moving toward salvation; we have it the instant we are convinced the message is true.

This matches what we see across the New Testament. Eternal life is a present possession the moment a person believes (John 5:24, 3:36). We will unpack those passages in coming weeks. The simplicity and certainty of the gospel is this: hear the message of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and what He promises; be convinced it is true, and you are sealed, saved, owned by God, and guaranteed an eternal inheritance.

Salvation is not something we earn. It is a gift received by believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice was “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Offerings, dedication, or any other deeds for salvation do not aid; they frustrate the Gospel. The work is complete.

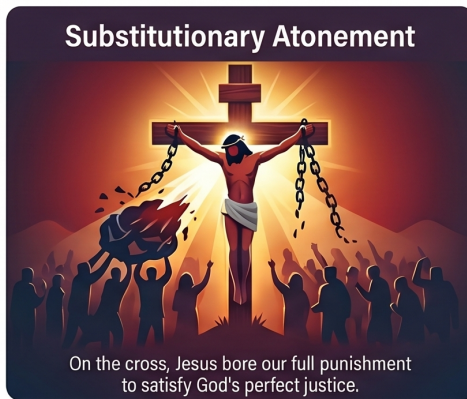
The Finished Work: What Jesus Did for Our Salvation

The Incarnation and Sinless Life



Jesus became human to represent us and lived perfectly to qualify as our substitute.

Substitutionary Atonement



On the cross, Jesus bore our full punishment to satisfy God's perfect justice.

The Resurrection



God's public declaration that the sacrifice was sufficient and the payment was accepted.

Once for All Sacrifice

Old Testament Sacrifices



Repeated continually

Unlike temporary animal sacrifices, Christ's single offering takes away sin forever.

Covered sin for a time

Impossible to remove guilt

The Work of Christ



Once for all

Once for all

Effect

Takes away sin forever

Status

Fully satisfies God's judgment

The Verdict for the Believer



"It Is Finished"

The transaction is complete; no ongoing works or additional payments are required.

Justification by Faith



Salvation is a gift received instantly the moment a person believes the message.